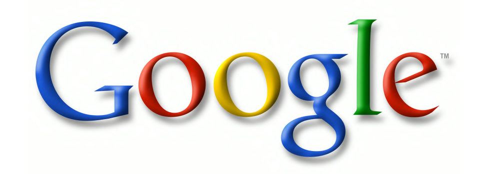



HD WIDENER
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AMERICAN·SCANDINAVIAN·FOUNDATION

THIS series of SCANDINAVIAN CLASSICS is published by The American-Scandinavian Foundation in the belief that greater familiarity with the chief literary monuments of the North will help Americans to a better understanding of Scandinavians, and thus serve to stimulate their sympathetic coöperation to good ends

SCANDINAVIAN CLASSICS

VOLUME X

GÖSTA BERLING'S SAGA

BY

SELMA LAGERLÖF

PART I



THIS VOLUME IS ENDOWED BY
MR. CHARLES S. PETERSON
OF CHICAGO

GÖSTA BERLING'S SAGA

BY

SELMA LAGERLÖF

TRANSLATED FROM THE SWEDISH
BY LILLIE TUDEER

PART I

NEW YORK
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Editorial Preface

NO series of SCANDINAVIAN CLASSICS would be complete without a romance representing the genius of Selma Lagerlöf. Two chief reasons have influenced the Committee on Publications of the American Scandinavian Foundation in choosing *Gösta Berling's Saga* for whatever distinction may accrue from its inclusion in the CLASSICS. In the first place, it is the author's earliest work. If she had written no other, her place in Swedish letters would have been assured for all time. In *Gösta* are consummated the story-telling aspirations of her youth and a literary ambition which for thirty-three years found no outlet. In the second place, whatever may be the judgment of posterity, *Gösta Berling's Saga*, in the popular estimate of Swedes to-day, is Selma Lagerlöf's masterpiece. On this point, to be sure, the critics are divided. It is justly held that *The Emperor of Portugallia* is a more skilfully constructed book, and *Jerusalem* more profoundly inspired, while other novels are found to excel in particular features. *Gösta* is in truth loosely put together, and sometimes as prolix as Arthurian romance, the very prototype of this long narrative of twelve vagrant Swedish cavaliers. But here per-

sonality combines with art to create a rhapsodic prose possessing the fervor of verse and a style new in world literature. Some paragraphs one hesitates whether to print as prose or *vers libre*. One could rewrite in metrical form, for example, the description of the beautiful Marienne Sinclaire, in "The Ball at Ekeby:"

> *Her presence gave inspiration to the speeches*
> *And life to the wine.*
> *She gave speed to the violin bows,*
> *And the dancing went gayer than ever*
> *Over the boards that she touched*
> *With her slender feet.*
> *She shone in the tableaux*
> *And in the acting.*

It is a good test of the national character of a story when public demand, as in the case of Mark Twain's *Bull Frog*, requires the author to write a second narrative to tell how the first came into existence. In *A Story of a Story*, one may read of the long, quiet years that went into the making of *Gösta;* how the frail Värmland girl, destined to renown, in her pastoral home at Mårbacka listened to spinsters and travelling fiddlers reciting the mad old days after the Napoleonic wars, when gay soldiers of fortune, by their pranks and romantic behavior, made the bright-eyed maidens and pleasure-loving

gentlemen of Värmland forget their poverty; how for years she experimented silently with these tales, put them into verse, tried dramatic form, and failing to find an audience for romantic prose, essayed in vain the popular realistic then style. At last a prize contest brought the romance to the light of day in its present form. The unfrocked clergyman, Gösta Berling, became chief and hero among the twelve uncertain gentlemen to whom the efficient Major's wife gave shelter under her generous roof at Ekeby.

Gösta Berling's Saga, in the Swedish original, was my introduction to the life and temperament of modern Sweden. Like many another, after reading it, I was overtaken by a consuming desire to see the children of the people whom this romance presented, a longing which impelled me, when occasion offered, to visit Värmland and that Lake Fryken whose name the author has changed and whose shores she has made immortal. While on my pilgrimage I sat for a time in the seat of the scornful, among a group of realists and disciples of Strindberg in Copenhagen. By them I was told that no such people existed in reality as those day-dreamers of the novel. But the Värmlanders of to-day are true to their forebears, as I found on a walking trip which I have described elsewhere. I well recall, as I drew

near the Lake, a group of women carding flax by the roadside, laughing and chatting, a generous family that included a grandmother and many granddaughters. As I stopped for a moment to look at their task, one of them, a sprightly maid, seizing a handful of chaff, ran up and administered it to my neck. I had scarcely time to dodge this assailant when I was attacked by a sister with a similar weapon. The older women went on with their work, laughing merrily at the discomfiture of the stranger. Such was my introduction to the gay fellowship of Värmland, as blithe to-day, though not so romantic, as in the period, now nearly a century ago, described in the saga.

As to geography, the tourist can readily satisfy himself by visiting and identifying most of the homesteads and villages of the story. Selma Lagerlöf has rechristened them, to be sure, but fact and fiction can be differentiated by the aid of local guide-books or with the help of the map prefaced to the present edition.

The excellent translation of Lillie Tudeer, first published in 1894, hitherto inaccessible in America and out of print in England, is here reprinted by permission of the English publishers, Chapman & Hall. The text, however, has been carefully edited and a few passages corrected by Hanna

Astrup Larsen, the translator of Jacobsen's *Marie Grubbe*, published by the Foundation. Eight chapters that were silently omitted in the British edition have been restored in a new translation by Velma Swanston Howard, translator of other works of Selma Lagerlöf published by Doubleday, Page and Company. These sections are indicated in the table of contents. At the end of the second volume will be found a Lagerlöf bibliography compiled by Vice-Consul G. N. Swan. It is necessarily incomplete because of imperfect war-time communication, but will serve to indicate the chronology of the literature of romance of which *Gösta Berling's Saga* is but a beginning.

HENRY GODDARD LEACH

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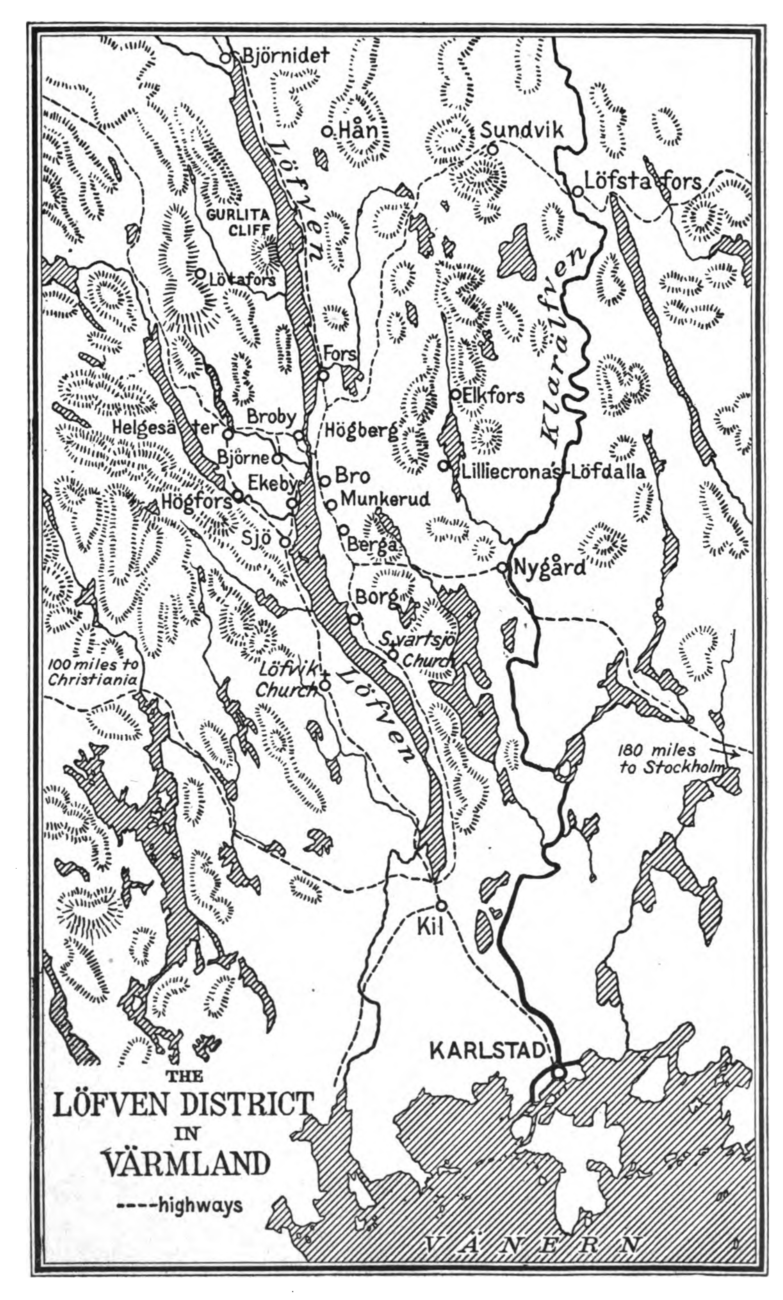
Part I

* Translated by Velma Swanston Howard.

GÖSTA BERLING'S SAGA

BY

SELMA LAGERLÖF


Björnidet
Hån
Sundvik
Löfsta fors
Löfven
GURLITA
CLIFF
Lötafors
Klarälfven
Fors
Elkfors
Helgesäter
Broby
Högberg
Björne
Bro
Lilliecrona's-Löfdalla
Ekeby
Högfors
Munkerud
Sjö
Berga
Nygård
Borg
Svartsjö
Church
100 miles to
Christiania
Löfvik
Church
Löfven
180 miles
to Stockholm
Kil
KARLSTAD
THE
LÖFVEN DISTRICT
IN
VÄRMLAND
----highways
VÄNERN

The Pastor

THE pastor was mounting the pulpit steps. The bowed heads of the congregation rose—he was there, then, after all, and there would be service that Sunday, though for many Sundays there had been none.

How tall and slight and how strikingly beautiful he was! In helmet and coat of mail he might have stood as model for a statue of an ancient Athenian. He had the unfathomable eyes of a poet, but the lower part of his face was that of a conqueror, his whole being was instinct with genius and refinement and warm poetic feeling, and the congregation were awed to see him thus.

They had grown accustomed to see him staggering out of the tavern, with his boon companions, Colonel Beerencreutz and Kristian Bergh, "the strong captain."

He had been drinking so heavily that for several weeks he had been unable to perform the duties of his office, and the parish had been forced to lodge a complaint against him, first to the rector, and then to the Bishop and Council. The Bishop had come to investigate the matter and was sitting in the choir, wearing his gold cross of office upon his breast, and was surrounded by the clergy from Karlstad and from the immediate parishes.

There was no doubt that the preacher's conduct had exceeded all bounds. People were lenient in those days—between 1820 and 1830—in the matter of drink; but this man had utterly neglected his sacred duties for its sake, and he was now to be deprived of his office.

He stood in the pulpit as the last verse of the hymn was being sung.

A certainty grew upon him, as he stood there, that every one in the church was an enemy. The gentry in the gallery, the peasants filling the nave, the confirmation candidates in the choir, all were his enemies, and so were the organ-blower and the organist. The vestry-men's pew was full of enemies. They all hated and despised him, from the babies in arms to the stiff and rigid sexton who had fought at Leipzig. He longed to throw himself on his knees before them and beg for mercy. But a moment later, a silent storm of rage took possession of him. He remembered only too well what he had been but a short year ago, when he had stood in that pulpit for the first time. He gave no cause for reproach then. Now he stood there again and saw before him the man with the gold cross, who had come to condemn him.

While he read the introductory prayer, the blood surged to his face in waves of anger.

He could not deny the charge—he had been drinking. But who could blame him? Had they seen

the parsonage where he lived? The pine forest stood dark and gloomy round his very windows; the moisture soaked through the black rafters and ran down the fungus-covered walls. Surely a man required the help of strong spirits to keep up his courage, when rain and driving snow rushed through the broken window-panes, when the ill-tilled soil hardly gave him enough to keep hunger from the door!

He thought he had been the very pastor for them; for they all drank. Why should he alone control himself? If a man buried his wife, he was dead drunk at the funeral; the man who christened his child gave a drinking bout after the christening; the people returning from church drank all the way home—a drunken pastor was the very man for them.

It was on his parochial rounds, when driving in his thin coat for miles over the frozen lakes, where the cold winds held high revel, or battling in his boat in storm and driving rain; when in whirling snowstorms he must leave his sledge, and lead his horse through mighty snowdrifts; when tramping through forest marshes—it was then he had learned to love strong drink.

The days dragged along in heavy gloom. Peasant and lord went their way with thoughts tied to earth till the evening brought freedom, when, loosened by wine, their spirits rose and cast aside their bonds. Inspiration came to them, their hearts glowed, and

life grew beautiful—full of music and the scent of roses. To the young preacher, the tap-room of the tavern became transformed to a southern pleasure-garden; olives and grapes hung above him, marble columns gleamed through thick foliage, poets and philosophers strolled and conversed under the palm trees.

No!—the preacher in that pulpit knew that life without drink was unbearable in that isolated part of the world. All his hearers knew it too, yet they had come to condemn him.

They meant to tear away his priestly gown, because he had come a drunkard to the house of their God. Oh, the hypocrites, had they, did they really think they had, any other God than their drink?

He had finished the opening prayer, and now knelt to say "Our Father."

There was breathless silence in the church. Suddenly he clutched with both hands the band that held his gown in place; for it seemed to him that all the congregation, with the Bishop at their head, were creeping silently up the pulpit steps, intent on tearing it from his shoulders. He was on his knees and did not turn his head, but it seemed to him that he felt them pulling, and he saw them so distinctly—the Bishop and the dean, all the rectors and the vestry-men, pressing forward, and he pictured how they would all fall, one over the other, when the clasp gave way—even those who had not reached

him but had been pulling at the coats of those before them.

He saw it so clearly, he could not help smiling, though the cold sweat broke out on his forehead. It was horrible.

He, to be an outcast on account of drink—a disgraced clergyman! Was there any one on earth more despicable?

He, to be a wayside beggar, to lie drunk in the ditches, go clad in rags, and consort with vagabonds!

The prayer was over, and he was about to read his sermon, when a thought struck him and checked the words on his lips. He remembered that this would be the last time he would stand in a pulpit and proclaim the glory of God.

The last time—that touched him. He forgot the Bishop and the drinking; he only felt that he must take the opportunity and bear witness to the glory of his God.

The nave of the church, with all his hearers, seemed to sink deep, deep down: the roof was raised, and he could see right into heaven. He stood alone, his soul soaring to the opening heavens, and his voice grew strong and joyous as he spoke of the glory of God.

He was inspired, and forgot his written text; while thoughts descended upon him like a flight of tame doves, and he felt that it was not he who spoke.

But he also knew that none could surpass him in splendor and majesty, as he stood there and bore witness to his God.

While the fire of inspiration burned, he spoke; but as it presently ebbed away, and the heavens closed, and the nave of the church rose again from the depths, he fell on his knees and wept, for he knew that life held for him no higher moment, and it was past.

After the morning service there was a vestry meeting, presided over by the Bishop, who inquired what cause of complaint the congregation had against their pastor.

No longer angry and defiant, as he had been before the sermon, the young man hung his head in shame. Oh, the wretched stories that would now be brought forward!

But no one spoke—there was silence round the big table in the vestry house.

He glanced round, first at the sexton—he was silent; then at the vestry-men, the richer peasants, the owners of the iron works—they were all silent. They sat with firmly closed lips and looked down at the table rather awkwardly.

"They are waiting for some one to speak first," he thought.

At last one of the vestry-men cleared his throat.

"I think I may say that we have a very exceptional pastor," he said.

"Your Lordship has heard how he can preach," put in the sexton.

The Bishop mentioned the unobservance of the church services.

"Our pastor may be ill occasionally, like any other man," replied the peasants.

He hinted at their previously expressed disapproval of his ways.

They defended him with one accord. He was so young, there was no danger but things would come right. Indeed, if he would only preach every Sunday as he had preached that morning, they would not exchange him for the Bishop himself.

There was no prosecution, there could be no judgment.

The pastor felt how his heart expanded, how lightly the blood flowed along his veins. Ah! he was no longer among enemies, he had won these people when he had least expected it, and he could retain his priestly calling.

When the meeting was over, the Bishop, all the clergy, and the chief parishioners went to dine at the parsonage.

The wife of a neighbor had undertaken to arrange matters, as the young preacher was unmarried. She had managed everything in the best possible manner, and for the first time he saw that the parsonage could be made habitable. The long dining-table had been carried out of doors, and stood under

the pine trees, looking very inviting with its snowy cloth, its blue and white china, its glittering glass, and bright-colored serviettes. Two birch trees had been cut down and placed close to the house door as a decoration, juniper twigs were strewn over the hall floor, garlands hung from the ceiling, flowers decked every room, the smell of mould had been expelled, and the green window-panes shone cheerfully in the sunlight.

The young pastor was so radiantly happy, he felt sure he would never drink again.

All who sat at that dinner rejoiced; those who had forgiven past transgressions were happy, and the clergy were glad to have escaped a great scandal.

The good Bishop raised his glass, and told them that he had entered upon this visit with a heavy heart, for he had heard many evil reports. He had gone forth to meet Saul—but behold, Saul had been changed to Paul, who was to do greater work than any among them. And the reverend man spoke of the rich talents which were the portion of their young brother, and praised them highly, not with the intent of awakening his vanity, but as an encouragement to put forth all his strength and guard himself, as all they must do who have a more than usually heavy but precious burden to bear.

The young pastor drank no wine at that dinner, but he was intensely excited. The great and unexpected happiness affected him—the divine fire of

inspiration had touched him, and he had won the love of his fellow-men; and when evening came, and all his guests had departed, the blood still coursed at fever heat through his veins. Late into the night, he sat in his room, letting the air stream in through the open window to cool that feverish excitement, that restless happiness which would not let him sleep.

Suddenly a voice broke the silence.

"Are you still awake, parson?"

And a man strode over the grass plot to the open window.

The pastor recognized Captain Kristian Bergh, one of his most staunch boon companions. An adventurer without house or home was this Captain Kristian—a giant in size and strength, as big as Gurlita Cliff, and as stupid as a mountain gnome.

"Of course I'm awake," he answered; "this is no night for sleeping."

And listen to what the Captain tells him! The giant, too, had his ideas upon the events of the day—he understood that the time had come when his friend might fear to continue in the old ways. He could never feel secure now—those clergymen from Karlstad, who had been here once, might come again; so he, Kristian Bergh, had laid his heavy hand to the good work, and had so arranged matters that they would never come again—neither they nor the Bishop. Hereafter, he and his friend

might drink as much as they pleased at the parsonage.

Hear him, what a feat he has accomplished!

When the Bishop and his two companions had entered their carriage, and the door had been firmly closed upon them, he had climbed upon the driving seat, and had driven them a dozen miles on their homeward way in the clear summer night.

It was then they had learned that life sits insecurely even in the worthiest breasts. He had driven at a break-neck pace, as a punishment on them for not allowing an honest man to drink in peace.

He did not drive along the road, or guide the horses, but went over ditches, and half-cleared fields full of tree stumps. He tore down the hillsides and along the shores of lakes, where the water splashed over the wheels and the carriage half sank in the marshy ground, and over bare rocks, where the horses slid downward on stiffly braced feet. And meanwhile, behind the leather curtains, the Bishop and his companions were muttering prayers in terror for their lives — they had never known such danger before.

Imagine what was their appearance when they arrived at Rissäter post station, alive, but shaking like peas in a pod!

"What is the meaning of this, Captain Kristian?" asked the Bishop, as the Captain opened the door for him.

"The meaning is that the Bishop will think twice before making a second visitation to Gösta Berling," replied the Captain, having prepared the sentence beforehand.

"Greet Gösta Berling from me," answered the Bishop, "and say that neither I nor any other bishop will ever come to him again."

And this was the brave deed told at the open window on that summer night. Captain Kristian had only had time to return the horses to the post station and come on with the news.

"And now you can be at peace, good comrade," said he.

But ah! Kristian Bergh, the rectors sat with pale faces behind the leather curtains, but the face of this preacher is paler still. He even lifted his arm and aimed a fearful blow at the coarse, stupid face of the giant before him, but he checked himself, closed the window with a crash, and turned into the room, shaking his clenched fist above his head.

He, who with divine inspiration had proclaimed the majesty of God that morning, felt now that God had mocked him.

The Bishop could only think that Captain Bergh had been instructed; he must believe he had acted the hypocrite all day. He would be suspended and dismissed.

When morning came, the young pastor had left the parish. It was not worth while to remain and try

to defend himself. God had mocked him. He would not help him. He knew he would be disgraced, God willed it so, and he might as well go at once.

This took place about 1820 in a distant parish in western Värmland.

It was the first misfortune that befell Gösta Berling; it was not the last.

Young horses who cannot bear the whip or spur find life hard. At every smart they start forward and rush to their destruction, and when the way is stony and difficult, they know no better expedient than to overturn the cart and gallop madly away.

The Beggar

ONE cold day in December a beggar was climbing the ascent to Bro. He was clad in the poorest rags, and his shoes were so worn that the cold snow wet his feet.

The Löfven is a long, narrow lake in Värmland, contracting at several points to a mere strait. It stretches northward to the Finn Forests and southward to Vänern. Several parishes lie along its shores, but the parish of Bro is the largest and most wealthy. It comprises a wide expanse of country, both on the eastern and western shores of the lake; but the larger estates, such as Ekeby and Björne, renowned for their riches and their natural beauty, lie on the western shore, and here also is the large village of Bro, with its parsonage and county court, its Major's house, and inn, and market-place.

The village is built on a steep slope. The beggar had passed the tavern at the foot of the hill, and was making his way to the parsonage, which stood on the crest.

Before him, on the road, a little girl was dragging a small hand-sledge laden with a sack of flour. The beggar overtook and spoke to her.

"What a little horse to drag such a heavy load!" he said.

The child turned and glanced at him. She was

small for her twelve years, and had sharp, inquiring eyes and a firmly closed mouth.

"Would to God the horse was smaller and the load bigger, so it would last longer," she answered.

"Are you taking home your own fodder, then?"

"Yes, I am. Young as I am, I must find my own living."

The beggar grasped the back of the sledge, intending to help it forward, but she turned instantly, saying,

"You need not think I shall give you anything for your trouble."

He laughed.

"You must surely be the daughter of the Broby parson," he exclaimed.

"That is just who I am. Many have a poorer father, none have a worse, though it is a shame his own child should say so."

"Is it true, then, that he is both a miser and wicked, this father of yours?"

"He is miserly, and he is wicked; but people say his daughter will be worse, if she lives."

"I should think they might be right. I should like to know where you got that sack of flour?"

"Well, it makes no difference if you know or not. I took the rye out of the granary this morning, and I've been to the mill with it."

"Won't he see it when you bring it home?"

"Well, you certainly never finished your appren-

ticeship. My father is away on parish duty, of course."

"There is some one driving behind us. I hear the snow creaking under the sledge runners. Think— if it should be he!"

The child listened and looked round, and then burst into a storm of tears.

"It is father," she sobbed. "He will kill me— he will kill me!"

"H'm, good advice is precious, and prompt advice is better than silver and gold," remarked the beggar.

"See," cried the child, "you can help me. Take the rope and draw the sledge, and father will think it is yours."

"What shall I do with it afterwards?" asked the man, as he threw the rope over his shoulders.

"Take it where you like at present, but when it gets dark, bring it to the parsonage. I 'll be on the lookout for you. Mind you bring both sledge and flour; you understand?"

"I 'll try."

"God have mercy on you if you don't," she shouted, as she sprang up the path to reach home before her father arrived.

The beggar turned the sledge, and with a heavy heart guided it back to the tavern.

He, poor wretch, had had his dream while wandering through the snow with half-frozen feet. He

had dreamed of the great forest north of the lake, of the great primeval forest.

Here, in the parish of Bro, as he made his way from the Upper to the Lower Löfven, in this land of wealth and joy, where the estates lay side by side, and the great iron foundries adjoined one another, every path seemed too steep for him, every room too narrow, every bed too hard. A bitter longing for the quiet of the great forest had taken possession of him.

Here, he heard the thunder of the flails on every threshing floor, as if the grain were unfailing; here, loads of timber came in endless succession from the inexhaustible forests, and the heavy wagons of ore obliterated the deep ruts cut into the roads by the preceding carts; here, sledgefuls of guests drove from one estate to another, and it seemed to him as if Joy held the reins, and Youth and Beauty stood on the runners. Oh, how he longed, as he watched them, longed for the peace of the everlasting forest!

There the trees rise straight and column-like from the level, snow-covered ground. Wreaths of snow hang on the motionless branches; the wind is powerless, and can only sway gently the tops of the fir trees. He would go there, make his way into the very depth of the great forest, till his strength failed him, and he fell down under the great trees to die of hunger and cold.

He longed for the great murmuring grave which

awaited him beyond the Löfven, where the powers of death would at last gain the mastery over him, where hunger and cold and weariness and past drunkenness would at last destroy the body, which had been able to withstand so much.

He returned to the tavern, intending to remain there till the evening, and entered the tap-room, where he rested in heavy mood on the bench, still dreaming of the everlasting forest.

The landlady took pity on him, and gave him a glass of strong gin. She even gave him a second glass, as he begged so eagerly for it; but more than that she refused, and the beggar grew desperate. He must have some more of that strong, sweet drink, his heart must dance once more, his thoughts flame in the transport of intoxication! Oh, that sweet drink! Summer's sun and summer's song, summer's scent and beauty were surging in its white transparency. Once again, before he departed into night and darkness, he must drink of the summer's sun and joy.

So he bartered first the flour, then the sack, and lastly the sledge for drink. He had got sufficient now, and slept away the most of the afternoon in the tap-room.

When he awoke, he knew there was but one thing left for him to do. As his miserable body had so completely gained ascendency over his soul; as he had fallen so low that he could betray the trust of

a child; as he was a living shame on earth, he must relieve the earth of the burden of so much wretchedness. He must free his soul and let it return to God.

As he lay half stupefied on the bench, he passed sentence upon himself. "Gösta Berling, disgraced clergyman, charged with stealing the sustenance of a hungry child, is sentenced to death. What death? —Death in the snowdrifts."

He clutched his cap and staggered out. He was not quite awake, nor was he sober, and he wept, thinking of his degraded soul which he was going to set at liberty. He did not go far, nor did he leave the highway. A deep drift lay close at hand; he cast himself into it and tried to sleep again.

None knew how long he lay there, but life still dwelt within him when, later in the evening, the parson's little daughter ran down the road with a light in her hand and found him lying there. She had expected him hours ago, and at last ran down to the village to find him. She recognized him at once, and tried to shake him, screaming loudly.

She *must* know what he had done with her sack of flour. He *must* revive, if only to tell her what had become of the sledge and meal-sack. Her father would kill her if the sledge were not forthcoming. She bit the hand of the sleeping man, scratched his face, and screamed as if crazy.

Just then some one drove by.

"Who the devil is screaming like that?" a harsh voice called.

"I want to know what this man has done with my meal-sack and my sledge," sobbed the child, continuing to beat with clenched fists on the beggar's breast.

"Is it a frozen man you are treating like that? Off with you, you wild cat!"

The new arrival was a big, rough woman. She got out of her sledge, and came to the drift; she lifted up the child by the back of her neck and flung her into the road, stooped, and slipping her arms under the unconscious man, carried him to her sledge and laid him gently down.

"Come with me to the tavern, wild cat," she called to the parson's daughter, "and we will see what you have to do with this affair."

An hour later the beggar was sitting on a chair near the door of the best room in the tavern, and before him stood the imperious woman who had saved his life.

As Gösta Berling now saw her, on her way home from inspecting the charcoal-burning in the forest, with sooty hands, a clay pipe in her mouth, dressed in a short jacket of unlined sheepskin over a striped woollen homespun skirt, with tarred boots on her feet and a sheathed knife thrust into the breast of her jacket,—as he saw her thus, with her grey hair brushed away from her beautiful face, he had heard

her described scores of times, and he knew at once he had fallen into the hands of the famous lady of the Manor, the Major's wife at Ekeby.

She was the most powerful woman in Värmland, the owner of seven foundries, accustomed to command and to be obeyed; and he was only a miserably weak man, waiting for death, destitute of everything, knowing full well that every path was too steep for him, every room too narrow, and he trembled as she looked at him.

She stood for some time gazing silently at the human wreck before her — at the red, swollen hands, the enfeebled body, and the splendid head, which even in its downfall was radiant in wild beauty.

"You are Gösta Berling, the mad parson?" she asked.

The beggar was silent.

"I am the Major's wife at Ekeby!"

A shudder ran through him. He clasped his hands tremblingly and lifted beseeching eyes. What would she do? Would she compel him to live? He trembled before her power. And he had so nearly gained the peace of the everlasting forest!

She opened the conversation by saying that the child had received her sledge and sack of flour, and that she had a refuge for him, as for so many other waifs and strays, in the cavaliers' wing at Ekeby Hall. She offered him a life of idleness and pleasure, but he answered that he must die.

Then she struck the table with her clenched fist, and gave him a piece of her mind.

"Oh, indeed, you want to die, do you? Well, I shouldn't have been so greatly surprised if I had found you to be really alive. But look at your half-starved body, your helpless limbs, and dim eyes! Do you mean to tell me there is anything left to kill? Do you suppose it is necessary to lie stiff and straight and to be nailed into a coffin to be dead? Don't you suppose that, standing here, I can see how dead you are, Gösta Berling? What have you but a skull in place of a head, and worms creeping out of your eyes? Don't you taste the earth in your mouth, and don't you hear your bones rattle when you move? You have drowned yourself in drink, Gösta Berling; you are already dead.

"Is it the shame of having once been a preacher that is driving you now to kill yourself? More honor would be gained if you would employ your talents and be of some use on God's green earth. Why didn't you come to me in your trouble, and I should have put things right for you? And now I suppose you expected to win some respect when you were laid out, and people spoke of you as a beautiful corpse?"

The beggar sat calm, almost smiling, while she thundered forth her anger. "No fear," he thought, joyfully; "the forest awaits me, she has no power to move me."

But suddenly the Major's wife was silent—and took two or three turns about the room. Then she drew up a chair to the fire, placed her feet on the hearth, and rested her elbows on her knees.

"Good God," she said, half laughing to herself, "what I said was so true, I did n't notice it myself. Don't you think, Gösta Berling, that most people in the world are dead or half dead? Do you think we are all alive? Ah, no!

"Look at me. I am the Lady of the Manor at Ekeby and the most powerful woman in Värmland. If I lift a finger, the county police must skip; if I lift two, the bishop does the same; and if I lift three, I can make the archbishop and council and all the judges and landed proprietors in Värmland dance a polka on Karlstad market-place. And yet I tell you, boy, I am nothing but a dressed-up corpse. God alone knows how little life there is in me!"

The beggar leaned forward in his chair and listened anxiously. The old lady rocked herself before the fire, and never glanced at him as she spoke.

"Don't you think," she continued, "that if I were a living soul, and saw you sitting there, miserable and sad, with thoughts of suicide in your mind, that I could dispel them in a breath? I should have tears and prayers to move you, and I should save you—but now—I am dead. God knows how little life there is in me!

"Have you never heard that once I was the beautiful Margarita Celsing? It was n't quite yesterday, but even yet I can weep my old eyes red when I think of her. Why is Margarita Celsing dead—and Margarita Samzelius living? Why should the Major's wife at Ekeby be alive, Gösta Berling?

"Do you know what Margarita Celsing was like? She was tall and slight and gentle, and knew no evil; she was a girl over whose grave the angels wept. She knew no evil, she knew no sorrow, and she was good to all. And she was beautiful, really beautiful.

"And there lived a splendid man in those days—his name was Altringer. God alone knows how he found his way up to the lonely foundry in the wilderness where Margarita lived with her parents. Margarita saw him—he was a splendid man—and he loved her.

"But he was poor; so they determined to wait for five years, as they do in the ballads.

"But when three years had passed, another man wanted her. He was ugly and wicked, but her parents believed him to be rich; and they forced Margarita, by fair means and foul, by blows and hard words, to take him as her husband. That day Margarita Celsing died. Since then, there only exists Major Samzelius' wife, and she is neither good nor gentle, she knows much evil, and thinks little of the good. I suppose you have heard what hap-

pened later. We lived at Sjö, here near the lake, the Major and I; but he was not as rich as people had said, and I had many hard days.

"And then Altringer came back, and he was a wealthy man. He was Lord of Ekeby, the boundaries of which joined Sjö, and he was soon the owner of seven foundries on the banks of the Löfven. He was clever and capable, a splendid man in every way.

"He helped us in our poverty: we drove in his carriage; he sent food to our kitchen and wine to our cellar. He filled my life with pleasures and amusements.

"The Major went to the wars, but little we cared. I was guest at Ekeby one day, and he came to Sjö the next. Oh, life in those days was one long dance of pleasure along the shores of Löfven Lake! But presently people began to talk about us. If Margarita Celsing had lived, it would have hurt her, but it was nothing to me. Yet I did n't understand the reason why I felt nothing,—that it was because I was already dead.

"And tales of me were told to my father and mother, as they worked among their mines in the Älfdal forest. My mother lost no time in considering what she would do; she started off at once to speak to me.

"One day, when the Major was away, and Altringer and some others were dining with me, she

drove up to the house. I saw her enter the room, but I could not feel her to be my mother, Gösta Berling. I greeted her as a stranger, and asked her to sit down and dine with us.

"She tried to address me as her daughter, but I told her she was mistaken, my parents were both dead, they had died on my wedding-day.

"And she entered into the comedy. She was seventy, and had driven a hundred and forty miles in three days, but she sat down to her dinner without further ceremony. She was a wonderfully strong woman.

"She remarked that it was unfortunate that I should have experienced such a loss on my wedding-day.

"'The greater misfortune was,' I replied, 'that my parents had not died a day earlier; then the wedding would never have come off.'

"'My lady is not happy in her marriage, then?'

"'Yes,' I answered, 'I'm happy now. I am happy in obeying the will of my dear parents.'

"She asked me if it was their will that I should bring shame upon myself and upon them in deceiving my husband. No honor was brought to them by my making myself the talk of the country-side.

"'They made their bed, and they must lie on it,' I replied. 'And, by the way, the strange lady might as well understand that I allowed no one to defame my father's daughter.'

"We ate our dinner, we two—but the men around us sat silent and dared hardly touch knife and fork.

"She remained a day with me, and then drove home again. But all the time I never felt her to be my mother. It seemed to me my mother was dead.

"When she was leaving, Gösta Berling, and I stood beside her on the steps, and the carriage had driven up, she said to me: 'I have been here a whole day, and you have not recognized me as your mother. I have travelled a long and lonely road to see you—a hundred and forty miles in three days—and I tremble for shame of you, as if I had been beaten. May you be disowned as I have been, cast out as I have been! May the roadside be your home, straw be your bed, and the lime-kiln your fireside! May shame and insult be your wage, and may others smite you as I smite you!'

"And she gave me a hard blow on my cheek.

"But I lifted her in my arms, carried her down, and placed her in the carriage.

"'Who are you,' I cried, 'to dare to curse me? Who are you to strike me? I will endure it from no one!'

"And I gave her back the blow again. The carriage drove away at that moment, and that was the first time, Gösta Berling, I felt that Margarita Celsing was dead. She had been good and guileless. Angels wept at her death. If she had lived, she would never have struck her mother."

The beggar sitting at the door listened, and her words drowned for a moment the tempting murmur of the everlasting forest. This imperious woman made herself his equal in sin, his sister in perdition, to give him the courage to take up his life again. He was to learn that sorrow and reproach rested on other hearts than his alone.

He rose and approached her.

"Won't you live your life, Gösta Berling?" she asked in a voice that broke into tears. "Why should you die? You may have been a good preacher, but the Gösta Berling you drowned in drink could not have been as blameless as the Margarita Celsing I killed in hatred."

Gösta kneeled before her. "Forgive me—I cannot," he answered.

"I am an old woman," she said, "hardened by troubles, and yet I sit here and give myself to the mercy of a beggar, whom I found in a snowdrift. It serves me right—at any rate, if you kill yourself, you can't tell anybody what a fool I've been."

"I am doomed. Don't make the fight too hard for me. I cannot live. My body has mastered my soul. I must set it free and let it return to God."

"Oh, indeed—you think it will go there?"

"Farewell—and thank you."

"Farewell, Gösta Berling."

The beggar rose and went with bowed head to the door. The woman made the way hard for him.

When he reached the door, he felt compelled to turn and glance back — and he met her look as she sat motionless by the fire and gazed at him.

He had never seen such a look on any face, and he stood and stared at her. She, who recently had been hot and angry and scornful, was transfigured; her eyes shone with sad and sympathizing love. There was something within him — within his own desponding heart, which broke at that look. He leaned his forehead against the door-post, stretched his arms over his head, and wept as if his heart were breaking.

Margarita Samzelius flung her pipe into the fire, and came to him with a movement as tender as a mother's.

"Hush — hush — my boy."

And she drew him down beside her on the bench near the door, so that he wept with his head pillowed on her knees.

"Are you still determined to die?"

He tried to rise, but she held him down by gentle force.

"I tell you, and it is for the last time, you can do as you like; but if you will live, I promise you to take the parson's daughter and make a good woman of her, so she will thank her God one day that you stole her flour."

He lifted his head and looked into her eyes.

"Do you mean it?"

"I promise, Gösta Berling."

Then he wrung his hands in despair. He saw before him the child's cunning eyes, her little drawn mouth and bony hands. She would receive protection and be cared for, and the marks of neglect would disappear from her body; the anger would be wiped out of her soul. The paths to the forest were closed to him.

"I will not kill myself while she is under your care," he said; "I knew you would compel me to live. I felt that you would be too strong for me."

"Gösta Berling," she answered, solemnly, "I have fought for you as for my own soul. I said to God: 'If there is anything of Margarita Celsing within me, let her come forth and save this man,' and He granted it. You felt her power, and could not go. And it was whispered to me that you would give up that terrible determination for the sake of that poor child. Oh, you wild birds, you fly daringly, but the Lord knows the net that will catch you!"

"He is a great and wonderful God," said Gösta Berling. "He has mocked me and rejected me, but He will not let me die. His will be done."

From that day, Gösta Berling became one of the cavaliers of Ekeby. Twice he attempted to make a living for himself. Once the Major's wife gave him a cottage and strip of land near Ekeby, and he tried to live the life of a workman. It answered for a time, but he grew weary of the loneliness and of the daily

round of small duties, and returned to Ekeby. Later he became tutor at Borg to the young Count, Henrik Dohna. While there he fell in love with Ebba Dohna, the Count's sister, but she died just when he thought to win her, and after that he gave up all thought of being anything but a cavalier at Ekeby. It seemed to him that for an unfrocked clergyman all roads to amendment were closed.

The Landscape

NOW I must beg those of my readers who know this lake, this fertile plain, and those blue mountains, to skip a few pages. They can do this without compunction, for the story will be long enough without them. But you will understand that I must describe the country for those who do not know it, as it was the scene where Gösta Berling and the gay cavaliers of Ekeby spent their lives; and those who have seen it will understand too that the task surpasses the power of one who can only wield the pen.

I should have chosen to confine myself to saying that the name of the lake is the Löfven; that it is long and narrow, and that it stretches from the distant forests in the north of Värmland to the Vänern lowlands in the south; that a plain borders each side of the lake, and that a chain of undulating mountains surrounds the lake valley. But this is not sufficient, and I must try to picture in more graphic words the scene of my childhood's dreams, the home of my childhood's heroes.

The Löfven has its source far in the north, which is a glorious land for a lake, for the forests and hills gather water for it unceasingly, and streams and brooklets pour into it all the year round. It has fine white sand to recline upon; it has islands and pro-

montories to admire and reflect; water-sprites and nixies make it their playground, and it soon grows strong and beautiful. Up in the north it is friendly and gay. You should see it on an early summer morning, when it lies wide awake under its veil of mist, to understand how happy it can seem.

It seems as if it would coquette with you at first, so gently, so gradually does it creep out of its light covering; and so enchantingly beautiful is it that you hardly recognize it, till suddenly it flings its veil aside and lies there naked and rosy, glittering in the sunshine.

But the Löfven is not content with a life of pleasure alone. It pushes its way through the sand-hills on the south; it contracts to a narrow strait, and seeks a new kingdom for itself. It soon finds one, and here again grows strong and mighty; it falls a bottomless depth, and adorns a cultivated landscape. But now its waters grow darker, its shores are less changeful, the winds are bleak, and the whole character of the lake is more severe; yet it remains ever proud and stately. Numbers of vessels and rafts pass over its surface, and it is late before it can go to its winter rest—not until Christmas. It is often in angry mood, and, turning white with sudden fury, wrecks the sailing boats, but it can also lie in dreamy quiet and reflect the sky.

But once again it longs to make its way into the world, though the hills are pressing close around it;

and it must contract again to a narrow strait, and creep between narrow sandy shores. Then it broadens out for the third time, but not with its former beauty and majesty. Its shores are lower and more monotonous, wilder winds blow, the lake goes early to its winter sleep. It is still beautiful, but it has lost the strength of its youth and manhood—it is a lake like any other. It throws out two arms to feel its way to the Vänern, and when it finds it, casts itself in aged weakness down the steep slope, and, after this last thundering exploit, sinks to rest.

A plain follows the course of the Löfven, but it has a hard fight to hold its own between the lake and the hills, from the cauldron-like valley, which is the lake's most northerly point, to the Vänern lowlands, where it finally gains the mastery, and spreads itself wide in indolent ease. The plain would have unquestionably preferred to follow the lake shores, but the hills give it no peace.

These hills are mighty granite walls, covered with forest, full of chasms, abounding in moss and lichen, difficult to penetrate into, and, in the days we are speaking of, the home of numberless wild beasts. There is many a tarn of inky black water and many a quagmire in those long, far-reaching ridges. Here and there you find a coal mine, or an opening in the forest where the timber has been felled; now and again a burned clearing, which shows that the hills allow of a little cultivation; but

for the most part they lie in placid calm, content to let the lights and shadows play their everlasting game over their slopes.

And the plain, which is good and fertile and loves cultivation, wages constant war against the hills—in all friendliness, be it understood.

"It is sufficient," says the plain to the hills, "if you raise your walls around me; then I shall be amply protected."

But the hills cannot be persuaded. They send out long stretches of tableland to the lake; they make lovely points from which to get a view; and, in fact, it is so seldom that they will leave the shore that the plain hardly ever has a chance of rolling itself down to the soft sand of the lake shore. But it is useless to complain.

"Be thankful we are here," answer the hills. "Remember the time before Christmas, when day after day the icy mists roll over the Löfven. We are doing you a good turn by standing here."

The plain laments its want of room and that it has no view.

"You are stupid," reply the hills. "You should feel how it blows here near the water. At the least, it requires a granite back and a pine tree covering to bear it all. Besides which, you should be content with looking at us."

And that is what the plain does. You know what wonderful changes of light and shade and color

pass over the hills. You have seen them in the midday light sinking to the horizon, pale blue and low, and at morning and evening rising in majestic height, as deep a blue as the zenith of heaven. Sometimes the light falls so sharply upon them, they look green or blue-black, and every fir tree, every path and chasm, shows clearly at a great distance.

Sometimes the hills draw aside and allow the plain to approach and look at the lake, but when it sees it in its anger, hissing and spitting like a wild cat, or sees it covered with cold mist (the water witches being busy with washing and brewing), it soon acknowledges that the hills were right, and returns willingly to its narrow prison.

For many, many generations the plain has been cultivated, and great things have been done there. Wherever a stream, in its rapid course, has flung itself over the sloping shores, mills and foundries have sprung up. On the light, open places, where the plain comes down to the lake, churches and parsonages have been built; and in the corners of the valleys, half way up the hillsides, on the stony ground where the corn will not grow, stand the peasants' huts and the officers' buildings and here and there a gentleman's mansion.

But it must be remembered that in 1820–30 the land was not nearly so cultivated nor so populated as it now is. Much was forest and lake and marsh which is now reclaimed.

The population was scanty, and the people made their living partly by carting and day work at the many foundries; while many left their homes to find work at a distance, for agriculture alone would not pay them. In those days they dressed in homespun, ate oat cakes, and were content with a daily wage of a krona. The poverty was great, but it was mitigated by an easy-going temperament and an inborn aptitude for handicrafts, which greatly developed when those people had to make their way among strangers.

And as these—the lake, the fertile plain, and the blue hills—make a most beautiful landscape, so these people, even to-day, are strong, courageous, and talented. Great progress has been made in their well-being and education.

May they greatly prosper, the dwellers near the lake and the blue hills! It is some of their stories I will now tell you.

Christmas Eve

SINTRAM was the name of the wicked proprietor of Fors; he, with the clumsy body of an ape, with long arms, bald head, and ugly grimacing face; he, whose whole delight it was to devise evil.

Sintram was the name of him who chose vagabonds and brawlers as workmen, and had only quarrelling and lying serving-girls about him, who maddened the dogs by thrusting pins into their noses, and lived happily amid hateful people and furious animals.

Sintram was the name of the man whose greatest pleasure was to masquerade as the Evil One in horns and tail and hoofs and hairy hide, and, suddenly appearing out of dusky corners, from behind the oven or the woodbox, frighten timid women and children.

Sintram was he who rejoiced to exchange old friendship for new enmity, and to poison the heart with lies.

Sintram was his name—and once he came to Ekeby.

. . . .

Drag the big wood sledge into the forge, pull it into the middle of the floor, and place the bottom of a tar barrel over it! That will serve as a table.

Bring up anything that will do to sit upon— three-cornered bootmakers' stools and empty packing-cases. Bring out the torn old armchair without a back, and the old racing sledge without runners, and the ancient coach!

Drag out the old coach; it will do for the speaker's chair! Just look at it! one wheel is missing, and the whole body of the carriage has disappeared, only the driver's seat remains, the cushion is ragged and mouldy, and the leather is red with age. The crazy old thing is as high as a house. Prop it up, prop it up, or it will go over!

Hurrah! it is Christmas Eve at Ekeby!

Behind the silken hangings of the double bed sleep the Major and his wife, sleep and believe that the cavaliers' wing is deep in slumber. The carters and servant-girls may be asleep, overpowered by porridge and strong Christmas ale, but not the gentlemen in the cavaliers' wing. How could any one think it?

No bare-legged smiths turn the pieces of molten iron, no sooty boys keep up the supply of coal; no big hammer hangs like an arm with a clenched fist from the ceiling—the anvil is bare, the furnace does not open its red mouth to devour the coal, the bellows do not creak. It is Christmas—the forge slumbers.

Sleep, sleep! the cavaliers alone are awake. The long pincers stand upright on the floor holding

candles in their claws. Out of the ten-gallon cauldron of brightest copper the flames flash blue into the darkness of the roof. Beerencreutz's horn lantern hangs on the forge hammer. Yellow punch gleams like sunlight in the punch-bowl. Here is a table and benches, and the cavaliers intend spending Christmas Eve in the forge.

There is gaiety and carousal, music and song, but the midnight festivity awakens no one. All noise from the forge is drowned by the mighty thunder of the waterfalls beyond it.

There is gaiety and carousal. Think if the Major's wife were to see them! Well, she would probably sit down and empty a glass with them. She is a sensible woman, a loud drinking song or a game of Harlequin would not frighten her. She is the richest woman in Värmland, as gruff as a man, and as proud as a queen. She loves song and the music of violins. Cards and wine she likes, and a table surrounded with guests. She likes plenty in her pantry, dancing and gaiety in her halls, and to have the cavaliers' wing full of her pensioners.

Look at them sitting round their punch-bowl! They are twelve—twelve men of might. There is nothing effeminate about them, nor are they dandies, but men whose renown will live long in Värmland—brave and strong men.

They are not dried parchment nor closely tied-up money-bags, but poor and reckless men, cava-

liers both day and night. They have not lived a life of ease as sleepy gentlemen on their own estates, but they are wayfarers, happy-go-lucky men, the heroes of a thousand adventures.

The cavaliers' wing has stood empty now for many years, and Ekeby is no longer the chosen refuge of homeless adventurers. Penniless noblemen and pensioned officers no longer traverse Värmland in their one-horse shays: but let the dead live again, let the joyous, careless, ever youthful men rise once again!

They could all play one musical instrument, some of them several. They were all as full of peculiarities and sayings and fancies and songs as an ant-hill is full of ants; but each had his special attribute, his highly prized cavalierly merit, which distinguished him from his companions. First of all I must mention Beerencreutz, the Colonel with the thick white moustache, the famous camphio-player and singer of Bellman's songs, and with him his friend and comrade in the wars, the silent Major Anders Fuchs, the great bear hunter. The third in the company would be little Ruster, the drum-major, who for years had been the Colonel's orderly, but his talent for brewing punch and for singing double-bass had raised him to the rank of cavalier. After him came the old ensign, Rutger von Örneclou, a lady killer, wearing a stock and wig and finely starched frill, and painted like a woman. He was

one of the chief cavaliers, and so was Kristian Bergh, the strong captain, who was a doughty hero, but as easily deceived as the giant in the fairy tales. In the company of these two you often saw the little round Squire Julius. He was clever, amusing, and talented; artist, orator, and ballad singer, and a good story teller; and he was ever ready with a joke at the expense of the gouty little ensign or the stupid giant.

There was also the great German, Kevenhüller, the inventor of the self-propelling carriage and the flying machine, he whose name still echoes in those murmuring forests. He was a nobleman by birth and appearance, with a high twisted moustache, pointed beard, eagle nose, and small, squinting eyes set in a network of wrinkles. Here sat also the great warrior, Cousin Kristoffer, who never went beyond the walls of the cavaliers' wing, unless a bear hunt or a specially foolhardy adventure was "on the *tapis;*" and near him sat Uncle Eberhard, the philosopher, who had not come to Ekeby to spend his life in amusement, but that, exempt from the necessity of earning his bread, he might devote himself wholly to completing his great work on the Science of Sciences.

Lastly, I name the best of the troop, the gentle Lövenborg, the man too good for this world, and who understood little of its ways; and Lilliecrona, the great musician, who had a good home of his

own, and always longed to be there, but who was forever chained to Ekeby, for his temperament required splendor and change to be able to endure life.

All these eleven men had left youth behind them, and some of them had passed middle age; but among them was one but thirty years old, in the full power of body and mind. This was Gösta Berling, the cavalier of cavaliers, who in himself was a greater orator, singer, musician, drinking champion, hunter, and gamester than all the others. He had every cavalierly virtue. What a man the Lady of the manor had made of him!

Look at him mounted on the speaker's chair! The darkness hangs from the ceiling behind him in heavy folds. His fair head shines out of it like the head of a young god—the youthful lightbearer who kindled chaos. He stands there, slight and beautiful, on fire with the love of adventure. But he speaks with great seriousness.

"Brother cavaliers, it draws toward midnight, our festivity is well on its way; it is time for us to drink the health of the thirteenth at table!"

"Dear Gösta," cried Squire Julius, "there is no thirteenth, there are only twelve of us."

"Every year one man dies at Ekeby," continued Gösta with increasing solemnity. "One of the guests of the cavaliers' wing dies—one of the joyous, careless, ever youthful men die. Well, what does it mat-

ter? Cavaliers may not grow old. If our shaking hands could not lift a glass, our failing eyes not distinguish the cards, what would life hold for us, and what good are we in life? Of the thirteen who celebrate Christmas Eve in the forge at Ekeby, one must die: but every year brings a man to keep up our number, a man experienced in all ways of amusement. One who can handle both the violin and the playing-cards must come and fill the empty place. Old butterflies ought to die while the summer sun still shines. I drink to the health of the thirteenth!"

"But, Gösta, we are twelve," remonstrated the cavaliers, leaving their glasses untouched.

Gösta Berling, whom they called the poet, though he never wrote any poetry, continued with unruffled calm:

"Brother cavaliers, have you forgotten who you are? You are the men who hold joy by force in Värmland! You lend life to the violin-bow, you keep the dancing going, and songs and amusement ring through the land. Your hearts have learned to refrain from gold, your hands from money. If you did not exist, dancing would die, summer would die, and roses and song and card-playing, and in the whole of this blessed land there would be nothing but iron and foundry proprietors. Joy shall live just as long as you do. For six years I have celebrated Christmas Eve at Ekeby, and no one has yet had

the courage to drink to the thirteenth! Who is it that is afraid to die?"

"But, Gösta," they screamed, "when we are only twelve, how can we drink to the thirteenth?"

Despair was painted on Gösta's face.

"Are we only twelve?" he cried. "Why, must we then die out of the land? Shall we be but eleven next year, and ten the year after? Shall our names become a legend and our company be annihilated? I call upon him, the thirteenth, for I am here to drink his health. From the deep of the sea, from the bowels of the earth, from heaven or from hell, I call upon him who is to keep up the number of the cavaliers!"

And there was a rustling in the chimney, the door of the smelting-furnace was thrown open, and the thirteenth appeared. He came in hairy hide, with tail and hoofs and horns and pointed beard, and at sight of him the cavaliers sprang up with a shout.

But in unrestrained glee, Gösta screamed, "Behold the thirteenth, hurrah!"

And thus he appeared, man's ancient enemy, appeared to the foolhardy who were disturbing the peace of the Christmas Eve. The friend of the witches who have signed away their souls in blood on coal-black paper had come — he who had danced with the Countess of Tvarsnäs for seven days and could not be exorcised by seven priests.

A multitude of thoughts stormed through the

minds of the old adventurers at sight of him. They probably wondered on whose account he was out that night.

Some of them were inclined to hurry away in fear, but they soon learned that their horned friend had not come to fetch away any of them to his dark kingdom. The clinking sound of the punch glasses and the songs had tempted him in. He wished to enjoy the sight of men's happiness on that holy Christmas Eve, and to throw aside the burden of his rule for a time.

Oh, cavaliers, cavaliers! which of you remembers it is Christmas Eve? The angels are singing over the shepherds in the fields; children lie in their beds and fear to sleep too soundly that they may not miss the beautiful early morning service. It is soon time to light the Christmas candles in the church at Bro, and far away in the forest homestead the boys have been making a resinous torch, with which to light their sweethearts to church. In the windows of the houses the housewives have placed tiers of candles ready for lighting when the stream of church-goers begins to pass. The sexton starts the Christmas hymn in his sleep, and the old rector lies in bed and tries if he has still sufficient voice to chant "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men."

Oh, cavaliers, it would have been better for you if you had been safe in your beds on this night of

peace instead of keeping company with the Prince of Darkness!

But they cried him welcome as Gösta did. They set a goblet full of wine in his hand, they gave him the place of honor at the table, and seemed as glad to see him as if his ugly, satyr-like face wore the lovely features of their youth's beloved.

Beerencreutz invited him to a game of camphio; Squire Julius sang him his best songs; Örneclou talked to him of beautiful women, those charming beings who sweeten existence. And he seemed to enjoy himself, as with princely ease he leaned back on the coach-seat of the old carriage, and lifted the brimming goblet in his claw-beweaponed hand to his smiling lips.

But Gösta Berling, of course, made him a speech. "Your highness," he said, "we have expected you at Ekeby for a long time, for you probably have some difficulty in gaining access to any other paradise. We live here without toiling, neither do we spin, of which your highness is probably aware. Roast sparrows here fly into our mouths, and the ale and brandy flow in streams about us. This is a charming place, you remark, my lord!

"We cavaliers have also expected you, because our company has never really been complete. You see the case is this—we are rather more than we give ourselves out to be; we are the legendary troop of twelve who go through Time. We were twelve

when we steered the world from the cloud-covered heights of Olympus, and twelve when we lived as birds in Ygdrasil's green crest. We follow wherever legend leads. Did we not sit twelve strong men round Arthur's Table, and were there not twelve paladins in the army of Charles the Great? One of us has been Thor, one Jupiter, as you can see to-day. The godlike splendor gleams sometimes through our rags; the lion's mane shows from under the donkey's hide. Time has used us badly, but when we are together, even the forge becomes Olympus, and the cavaliers' wing a Valhalla.

"But, your highness, we have not been complete in number. It is well known that in the fabled group of twelve there is always a Loki, a Prometheus. Him have we lacked! Your highness, I bid you welcome!"

"See, see," said the wicked one, "such grand phrases, such grand phrases! And I—I have no time to answer. Business, boys, business!—I must be off at once, or I would gladly serve you in any part you choose. Thanks for to-night's entertainment, old fellow, we'll meet again."

Then the cavaliers inquired where he was going, and he answered that the noble Fru Samzelius, the owner of Ekeby, was waiting to have her contract renewed. They were struck dumb with surprise.

She was a stern and capable woman, the Lady of

Ekeby. She could lift a sack of rye on her broad shoulders. She accompanied the transport of ore all the way from the mines at Bergslägen to Ekeby. She could sleep like a carter on the floor of the granary with a sack for her pillow. In the winter she sometimes watched the charcoal burning; in the summer she would follow a timber raft down the Löfven. A capable woman was she. She swore like a trooper, and reigned like a king over her seven foundries and her neighbors' estates, reigned over her own parish and the neighboring parishes—yea, over all the beautiful Värmland. But to the homeless cavaliers she had been like a mother, and they had therefore closed their ears to the whispers that told them she was in league with the devil.

So, with great astonishment, they asked him what contract she had made with him.

And their horned guest answered that he gave the Major's wife her seven foundries on condition that she sent him a man's soul every year.

Oh, what horror clutched at the hearts of the cavaliers! They knew it, of course, but they had never realized it. At Ekeby each year one of the cavaliers died—one of the joyous, careless, ever youthful men. Well, what did it matter? Cavaliers may not grow old. If their shaking hands could not lift a glass, or their failing eyes distinguish the cards, what could life hold for them? What good were they

in life? Old butterflies ought to die while the sun shines.

But now, only now, they grasped the meaning of it all.

Alas, the woman! Had she given them so many good meals, had she allowed them to drink her strong brewed ale and her brandy, only that they might fall from the drinking-halls and gaming-tables at Ekeby down to the King of Darkness—one every year, one for every flying year?

Alas, the woman! the witch! Strong men had come to Ekeby, come thither to destruction. And she ruined them there. Their brains were like sponges, their lungs but dried ashes, their spirits were darkened when they sank back on their death-beds and were ready at last for the long journey—destitute of hope, or soul, or virtue.

Alas, the woman! Better men than they had died like that, and so, too, would they die.

But the paralysis of fear did not hold the cavaliers for long.

"You, Prince of Darkness," they shouted, "never again shall you make your bloody contract with that witch—she shall die. Kristian Bergh, the strong captain, has flung the heaviest hammer the forge contains over his shoulder, and he will bury it to the shaft in the hag's head. You will get no more souls from her.

"And as for yourself, we will lay you on the

anvil and loosen the great hammer. We will hold you with pincers under its blows, and teach you to go hunting for the souls of cavaliers."

He was a coward, was the dark gentleman, as is known of old, and the talk of the great hammer did not please him. He called Kristian Bergh back, and began bargaining with the cavaliers.

"Take the seven foundries, cavaliers, and give me the Major's wife."

"Do you think us as base as she is?" cried Squire Julius. "We will take Ekeby and all the other foundries, but you must manage the Major's wife yourself."

"What does Gösta say?" asked the gentle Lövenborg. "Gösta Berling must speak. We must have his opinion on such an important subject."

"This is madness!" cried Gösta. "Cavaliers, don't be made fools of by him! What have we against the Major's wife? Regarding our souls, it must be as fate ordains; but it won't be with my consent that we are ungrateful wretches, and act like rogues and villains. I have eaten at her table for many long years, and will not desert her now."

"Yes, go to the devil, if you feel inclined, Gösta. We would rather reign over Ekeby."

"But are you raving mad, or have you drunk yourselves out of your senses? Do you believe in all this? Do you believe that he over there is the Evil One? Don't you see that it is a cursed joke?"

"See, see!" cried the dark gentleman. "He has not noticed that he is in a fair way to be ready for me, and yet he has been at Ekeby for seven years. He has not noticed how far he has got."

"Oh, nonsense, man! Did n't I help you to hide yourself in the furnace over there?"

"As if that made any difference; as if I am not as good a devil as any other. Yes, yes, Gösta Berling, you are caught. You have become a fine specimen under Fru Samzelius' treatment!"

"She saved me; what am I without her?" said Gösta.

"Of course, of course, just as if she had no purpose in keeping you at Ekeby. You tempt many to fall. You have great talents. Once you tried to be independent; you let her give you a cottage, and you became a workman and earned your own bread, and every day she passed the cottage with a bevy of beautiful girls in her train. Marienne Sinclaire was with her once, and then you threw aside your apron and spade, Gösta Berling, and became a cavalier again."

"The road passed that way, you rascal."

"Yes, yes, of course, the road passed that way. Afterwards you went to Borg to be tutor to Henrik Dohna, and you very nearly became Countess Märta's son-in-law. Who was it contrived the young Ebba Dohna should hear you were only an outcast parson, and should say you nay? It was the

Major's wife, Gösta Berling—she wanted you back."

"What of it?" said Gösta. "Ebba Dohna died shortly after. I could not have won her in any case."

The dark gentleman came close up to him and whispered in his ear.

"Died—yea—certainly she died. She killed herself for your sake, but they never told you."

"You are no bad devil," said Gösta.

"It was the Major's wife who arranged it all, I tell you. She wanted you back in the cavaliers' wing."

Gösta burst into a loud laugh.

"You are no bad devil," he shouted wildly. "Why should n't we make a contract with you? You are able to give us the seven foundries, I suppose, if you feel inclined?"

"A good thing for you if you don't fight any longer against good fortune."

The cavaliers drew an easy breath. It had come to such a pass with them that they could do nothing without Gösta. If he had refused to join the affair, nothing would have come of it. And it was a great thing for the poverty-stricken cavaliers to be made masters of Ekeby.

"But notice," said Gösta, "we take the seven foundries to save our souls—not for the sake of being rich, prosperous people, who count their money and weigh their iron. We refuse to be dried-up

parchment or tied-up money pouches; we are, and still remain, cavaliers."

"The very words of wisdom," mumbled the dark gentleman.

"So, if you give us the seven foundries for one year, we will take them; but remember this, if during that time we do anything which is uncavalier-like, anything sensible or useful or effeminate, you can take all the twelve of us, when the year is out, and give the foundries to whom you like."

The wicked one rubbed his hands with glee.

"But if we always behave like true cavaliers," continued Gösta, "you must never again make any contract about Ekeby, and you forfeit your wage for this year, both from us and from the Major's wife."

"That is hard," said the devil. "Oh, dear Gösta, I ought to get one soul, one poor little soul. I might as well have the Major's wife. Why do you spare her?"

"I don't buy and sell such goods," said Gösta. "But if you must have some one, you can take old Sintram at Fors; he is about ready for you, I can answer for it."

"See, see, that is worth mentioning," said the dark gentleman without blinking—"the cavaliers against Sintram. It will be a good year."

And so the contract was written with blood taken from Gösta Berling's little finger, on black paper supplied by the Evil One, with his own goose quill.

And when it was done, the cavaliers rejoiced. For a whole year everything that the world contained would be theirs, and afterwards there was always some way out of the scrape.

They pushed aside their chairs and formed a ring round the steaming kettle which stood in the middle of the floor. In their midst danced the Evil One, leaping high, till at last he threw himself down beside the kettle, tilted it over, and drank.

Then Beerencreutz threw himself down beside him, then Gösta, and after them all the other cavaliers, till they lay in a ring round the kettle, which was passed from mouth to mouth. At last a push sent it over, and the hot, sticky liquid streamed over them all.

When, swearing, they scrambled up, they found their dark friend had disappeared, but his golden promises still seemed to float like shining crowns over their heads.

The Christmas Dinner

FRU SAMZELIUS celebrated Christmas Day by giving a dinner-party at Ekeby. She took her place as hostess at a table spread for fifty guests, doing the honors with great splendor. The short fur jacket and striped skirt and clay pipe were cast aside. She rustled in silk, her bare arms were loaded with gold, and pearls gleamed on her white throat.

But where were the cavaliers? Where were the men who drank to the new owners of Ekeby out of the burnished kettle on the black floor of the forge?

In the corner near the fireplace the cavaliers were seated at a separate table; there was no room for them that day at the big central table. They were served later than the other guests, the wine flowed sparingly, none of the pretty women cast a glance in their direction, no one listened to Gösta's jokes.

The cavaliers were like tamed birds. They had had but an hour's sleep before they started to the early morning service at church, lighted on their way by torches and the stars. They saw the Christmas lights, they heard the Christmas hymns, and they became smiling children again. They forgot the Christmas Eve in the forge, as one forgets an evil dream.

The Lady of Ekeby was a powerful and great

dame. Who would dare lift his arm against her? Whose tongue would dare to bear witness against her? Certainly the cavaliers never could, who for so many years had eaten her bread and slept beneath her roof. She placed them where she chose; she could exclude them from her festivity altogether if she wished, and they were powerless. God bless them! why, they could not exist away from Ekeby!

The guests at the big table were enjoying themselves. Marienne Sinclaire's beautiful eyes were beaming, and you heard the low laugh of the gay little Countess Dohna.

But the cavaliers were moody. Why were they not with the other guests? What was the meaning of this insulting arrangement of the table in the fireplace corner? As if they were not fit for the best society?

The hostess sat between Count Dohna and the rector of Bro, while the cavaliers hung their heads like deserted children, and last night's thoughts awoke within them. Gay nonsense and ridiculous sayings were but shy guests at the smaller table, for the anger and the promises of last night had entered the hearts of the cavaliers.

Certainly Squire Julius managed to convince Kristian Bergh that the roasted grouse which were being handed round at the big table would not suffice for all the guests, but that did not cause much amusement.

"I know they can't go round," he said. "I know how many there were. But the cook was not at a loss, Kristian Bergh; they have roasted crows for us at the little table."

But Colonel Beerencreutz's lips unbend only to a faint smile, and Gösta Berling had looked all day as if he were considering the advisability of murdering some one.

"Is n't anything good enough for cavaliers?" he said.

Captain Bergh was furious Had n't he cherished a lifelong hatred for crows, those abominable cawing things? He hated them so bitterly that he dressed himself in a woman's fluttering skirt and tied a kerchief over his head, and made himself a laughing-stock to every man, in the autumn, for the purpose of creeping within gunshot of them when they were feeding on the fresh grain in the corn-fields.

In spring he followed them to their dances on the bare meadows in mating time and shot them. He sought their nests in summer, and destroyed their half-hatched eggs and the screaming unfeathered young.

He now clutched the plate of grouse.

"Don't you think I recognize them?" he thundered to the servant. "Do you suppose I must hear them caw to know them? The devil—to offer Kristian Bergh a crow—the devil!"

And taking up the grouse one by one he flung them against the wall.

"The devil!" he shouted, "the devil! to offer crows to Kristian Bergh!"

Just as he was wont to throw the helpless nestlings against the cliffs he now threw the roasted grouse against the wall of the dining-hall.

Grease and gravy flew around him; the birds rebounded from the wall into the middle of the floor. And the cavaliers rejoiced. Then the angry voice of the Lady of Ekeby reached their ears.

"Turn him out!" she called to the servants.

But they dared not touch him. After all, he was Kristian Bergh, the strong captain.

"Turn him out!"

He heard the order, and, terrible in his anger, he turned to her as a bear turns from the fallen adversary to the new persecutor. He strode toward her table, his heavy tread shaking the floor, till he stood before her with only the end of the table between them.

"Turn him out!" thundered the Major's wife again.

But he was mad; his furrowed forehead and his great clenched fists filled all with awe. He was a giant in size and strength. Both guests and servants trembled and dared not touch him—no one dared touch him when such rage darkened his senses.

He stood before the Lady of Ekeby and defied her.

"I took the crows and threw them against the wall; dare you say I did wrong?"

"Out with you, Captain!"

"Sh—you woman!—to offer Kristian Bergh crows to eat! If I did the right thing, I would take you and your seven d——"

"A thousand devils! Kristian Bergh, don't you dare to swear! No one swears here but myself!"

"Do you think I fear you, you witch? Do you think I don't know how you got your seven foundries?"

"Silence, Captain."

"When Altringer died, he gave them to you, because he had been your lover."

"Will you be silent?"

"Because you had been such a faithful wife, Margarita Samzelius; and the Major took the gift, and let you manage the foundries, and pretended not to understand, and Satan backed the whole affair—but this is the end of it."

Margarita Samzelius sank into her chair, she was pale and trembling, and it was with a low, strange voice she reiterated, "Yes, this is the end of it, and it is your work, Kristian Bergh!"

At that tone Kristian Bergh shivered, his face changed, and anxious tears filled his eyes.

"I am drunk," he cried. "I don't know what I

am saying; I have said nothing. Have I not been her dog and slave for forty years, her dog and slave and nothing more! She is Margarita Celsing whom I've served all my life. I can say nothing ill of her. What should I say of the beautiful Margarita Celsing? I am the dog that guards her door, and the slave who bears her burdens. She may strike and push me aside, but, you see, I bear it in silence. I have loved her for forty years, how could I speak evil of her?"

Ah, it was a wonderful sight to see him throw himself down and pray forgiveness; and, as she sat at the other side of the table, he crawled on his knees till he reached her, and bent down to kiss the hem of her skirt, and his tears wet the floor.

But not far from the Lady of Ekeby sat a strong little man. He had curly hair, small, squinting eyes, and a prominent under jaw, and he resembled a bear. He was a man of few words. He was Major Samzelius.

He rose when he heard Kristian Bergh's last words; so did his wife and all the fifty guests. The women were trembling with fear of what was coming, the men stood helpless, and at the feet of Margarita Samzelius lay Captain Kristian, kissing the hem of her skirt and wetting the floor with his tears.

The Major's broad hairy hands clenched slowly; he lifted his arm to strike.

But the woman spoke first—in her voice lay a dull tone, which was unusual.

"You stole me," she cried. "You came like a robber and stole me. They forced me with blows and hard words to be your wife. I have only served you as you deserved."

The Major's broad fist was lifted; his wife fell back a step and then spoke again.

"The living eel squirms under the knife; a woman married by force takes a lover. Will you strike me now for what happened twenty years ago? Why did n't you strike then? Don't you remember he lived at Ekeby and we at Sjö? Don't you remember how he helped us in our poverty? We drove in his carriages, we drank his wine. Did we hide anything from you? Were not his servants your servants? Did not his gold weigh down your pockets? Did you not take the seven foundries? Then you were silent and took his gifts. It was then you should have struck, Berndt Samzelius, it was then!"

Her husband turned from her and gazed around at all those present, and he read in their faces that they thought her right—that they all thought he had taken Altringer's property and gifts as a price for his silence.

"I never knew it," he cried, and stamped on the floor.

"It is well, then, that you should know it now," she interrupted, with a mocking ring in her voice.

"I almost feared you might die without knowing it. For now that you know it, I can talk freely with you, who have been my lord and jailer. You may know it now, that, in spite of you, I was his from whom you stole me. You may know it now, all you who have slandered me."

It was the old love that shone in her eyes and rang in her voice. She had her husband before her, with his clenched fist; she read horror and contempt in the faces around her; she felt it to be the last hour of her power; but she could not help rejoicing when for the first time she spoke openly of what was the happiest remembrance of her life.

"He was a man — a splendid man. Who were you that you dared come between us? I never saw his like. He gave me happiness; and he gave me riches. Blessed be his memory!"

Then the Major dropped his arm without striking; he knew now how he would punish her.

"Out," he shouted, "out of my house!"

She stood motionless.

But the cavaliers gazed at each other with pale faces. It seemed as if all that the Evil One had prophesied was being fulfilled. This, then, was the result of the contract not having been renewed. If this was true, it must also be true that for more than twenty years she had been sending cavaliers to hell, and they also were destined for that journey. Oh, the wretch!

"Out with you!" screamed the Major. "Beg your bread by the wayside, you shall have no further joy of your riches, you shall have no dwelling in his houses! It is the end of the Lady of Ekeby, and the day you set your foot within my house I will kill you!"

"You turn me out of my own home?"

"You have no home—Ekeby is mine."

A feeling of helplessness came over her, and she fell back to the threshold, the Major following her closely.

"You, who have been the unhappiness of my life, are you to have the power to treat me so?" she wailed.

"Out—out!"

She leaned against the door-post, clasped her hands, and hid her eyes. She was thinking of her mother, and whispered to herself:

"May you be denied as I've been denied, may the roadside be your home, and the strawstack be your bed!" So it had come to pass—so it had come.

It was the good old rector from Bro and the Judge from Munkerud who came forward and tried to calm Major Samzelius. They said he would do wisest in letting all old stories die, let things be as they were, forget and forgive. But he shook aside the friendly hands from his shoulders. He was as terrible to cross as was Kristian Bergh.

"It is no old story," he cried. "I knew it not till to-day; I could not punish her unfaithfulness before."

At that his wife lifted her head and regained her old courage.

"You shall go before I do. Do you imagine I fear you?" she said, and came forward again.

The Major did not answer her, but he watched her every movement, ready to strike her down if he could not be quit of her in any other way.

"Help me, good gentlemen!" she cried; "help me to get this man bound and taken away till he regains the use of his senses. Remember who I am — and who he is. Think of it before I am obliged to yield to him. I manage all Ekeby, and he sits feeding his bears all day in their bear-hole. Help me, my good neighbors! There will be terrible misery here if I leave you. The peasant earns his livelihood by cutting my forests and carrying my ore. The colliers live by providing me with coal, and the lumbermen steer my rafts. *I* give the work which brings them riches. The ironsmiths and carpenters and day laborers all live by serving me. Do you think that man can hold my work in hand? I tell you that if you send me away, you bring down famine upon yourselves."

Again hands were raised in help, again an attempt was made to pacify the Major.

"No," he screamed, "out with her! Who dares

justify a faithless wife? I tell you, if she does not go voluntarily, I will lift her up and carry her to my wild bears."

Then, in her great distress, the Lady of Ekeby turned to the cavaliers.

"Will you allow me to be driven from my home, cavaliers? Have I let you freeze in winter? Have I refused you wine and ale? Did I require work from your hands because I gave you food and clothing? Have you not enjoyed yourselves at my side as trustfully as children? Have you not danced through my halls, and have not gaiety and laughter been your daily bread? Don't let this man who has been the great unhappiness of my life, don't let him drive me from my home, cavaliers! Don't send me to be a beggar by the wayside!"

During these words Gösta Berling made his way to a lovely dark-haired girl who was sitting at the big table.

"You were often at Borg five years ago, Anna," he said. "Tell me, was it the Major's wife who told Ebba that I was an unfrocked clergyman?"

"Help her, Gösta," the girl answered.

"You can understand, I suppose, that I wish to know first if she made a murderer of me?"

"Oh, Gösta, what terrible thoughts! Help her, Gösta."

"You won't answer me, I see—then Sintram told the truth."

And Gösta went back to the cavaliers, and would not lift a finger to help Margarita Samzelius.

Oh! if she had not placed the cavaliers at a separate table in the chimney-corner, for the thoughts of last night are astir in their hearts, and their faces burn with anger hardly less than the Major's! Mercilessly they stand aloof during her pleading. Everything they saw emphasized the facts they had learned last night.

"One can see she did not get her contract renewed," muttered one of them. "Go to hell, you witch!" screamed another. "We ought by right to turn you out."

"You scoundrels!" shouted weak old Uncle Eberhard to the cavaliers; "don't you understand it was Sintram?"

"Of course we know," answered Julius, "but what of that? Can't it be true in spite of that? Does n't he do the work of the Evil One? Don't they understand one another well?"

"You go, Eberhard, you go and help her—you don't believe in hell," they cried, mockingly.

And Gösta Berling stood motionless, without word or movement.

No—out of that screaming, threatening, muttering crowd of cavaliers she could get no help.

She turned again to the door, and lifted her clasped hands to her eyes.

"May you be denied as I am denied!" she cried,

in her bitter sorrow. "May the wayside be your home, and the strawstack be your bed!" And she laid one hand on the door-handle, and lifted the other on high.

"Mark you—you who have beheld my downfall—mark that your hour is coming soon. You shall be cast abroad, and your place shall be empty. How will you stand where I do not support you? You, Melchior Sinclaire, you have a heavy hand, and you let your wife feel it—take care! You, parson of Broby, the punishment is coming! Madame Uggla, look to your home, poverty is at its doors! You beautiful women, Elizabeth Dohna, Marienne Sinclaire, Anna Stjärnhök, don't think I shall be the only one to fly from my home! Be on your guard, cavaliers, a storm is rising, and you will be swept away—your day is now past—yes, forever past! I do not mourn for myself, but for you, for the storm will go over your heads, and who can stand when I fall? Oh, my heart is heavy for the sake of the people! Who will give them work when I am gone?"

She opened the door, and then Kristian Bergh lifted his head and said, "How long must I lie here at your feet, Margarita Celsing? Will you not forgive me, that I may rise and fight for you?"

It was a hard struggle the Major's wife had with herself, for she knew that if she forgave him, he would fight her husband, and the man who had

loved her faithfully for forty years would probably be a murderer.

"Am I also to forgive?" she said. "Are you not the cause of all this trouble, Kristian Bergh? Go to the cavaliers and rejoice at your work!"

And so she left them. She went calmly, leaving terror behind her; she fell, but she was not without greatness in her fall. She did not stoop to weak repining, but even in her old age she rejoiced in the love of her youth. She did not stoop to wailing and tears when she left all behind her, and did not shrink from wandering through the land with a beggar's scrip and staff. She mourned over the poor and the happy, careless people on the banks of the Löfven, over the cavaliers, and all those whom she had protected and guarded. Deserted by every one, she had still strength to turn aside from her last friend, so as not to condemn him to being a murderer.

She was a powerful woman, great in strength of will and mighty in government. We shall hardly see another like her.

Next day Major Samzelius broke up his home at Ekeby, and moved to his own house at Sjö, which lies quite near the great foundry.

It had been plainly stated in Altringer's will, by which the Major had received the huge property of the seven foundries, that none of them were to be sold or given away, but after the death of the Major they were to pass to his wife and her heirs. As, there-

fore, he could not destroy the hated gift, he gave it into the hands of the cavaliers, thinking their bad management would do Ekeby and the other foundries the greatest harm.

And as no one in the land doubted that Sintram worked the will of his evil master, and as all his promises to the cavaliers had been so strangely fulfilled, they were all sure that the contract he had made with them would be carried out to the smallest detail, and they were determined to do nothing sensible or practical or uncavalier-like, and they were also quite convinced that the Major's wife was an abominable witch who had plotted their ruin.

Old Uncle Eberhard, the philosopher, made game of their belief, but who cared what such a man as Uncle Eberhard said—he was so obstinate himself in his beliefs that if he had stood in the midst of the fires of hell, and had seen all the devils grinning at him, he would still have said they were not there, because it was impossible that they should exist. Uncle Eberhard was a great philosopher.

Gösta Berling told no one what he thought. He certainly felt he had little cause to thank the Major's wife for making him an Ekeby cavalier, for it now seemed better to him to be dead than to know he had been the cause of Ebba Dohna's suicide. He lifted no hand in vengeance against the Major's wife, but neither would he help her. He could not. But the cavaliers had come to great power and

splendor. Christmas was at hand with its fêtes and its pleasures; their hearts were full of joy, and, if any sorrow hung over Gösta Berling, he did not bear it in his face or on his lips.

Gösta Berling—Poet

IT was Christmas, and a ball was to be given at Borg. At that time—and it must be nearly sixty years ago—young Count Dohna lived at Borg. He was newly married, and his countess was both young and beautiful. Gay times were in store for the old estate.

Invitations had also come to Ekeby; but of all the cavaliers who were spending Christmas there, Gösta Berling, the poet, as they called him, was the only one who was inclined to accept.

Borg and Ekeby lie on opposite shores of the narrow Löfven Lake—Borg is in Svartsjö parish, Ekeby in Bro—and when the lake is frozen, it is only a dozen miles from one estate to the other.

The penniless Gösta Berling was fitted out by the old cavaliers for this festivity as if he were a king's son who upheld the honor of the kingdom. His coat with its shining gold buttons was new, his cambric frills were finely starched, his patent leather shoes shone. His overcoat was lined with the finest beaver, and a cap of sable fur covered his fair, curly head. They spread a bearskin with silver claws over his racing sledge, and he was to drive black Don Juan, the pride of the stable.

He whistled to Tankred, his white hound, and, snatching up the reins, drove away gaily, carry-

ing with him an atmosphere of wealth and splendor.

It was early when he started. It was Sunday, and he heard the psalms being sung as he passed Bro Church. Afterwards he turned into the lonely forest road that led to Berga, Captain Uggla's home, where he intended to stop and dine.

Berga was not a rich man's house. Hunger knew the way to the Captain's thatch-covered dwelling, but he was received with jokes and laughter and entertainment, with song, as all other guests were, and he left as unwillingly as they did.

Old Mamsell Ulrika Dillner stood on the steps to welcome Gösta as he drove up. She was the housekeeper and managed the weaving-looms, and, as she curtsied to him, the false curls which hung round her brown old face danced with delight. She carried him off to the parlor, and poured forth the story of the changes and chances of the house and its inmates.

Trouble was at the door; hard times reigned at Berga. They had no horse-radish, even, to eat with their salt meat, and Ferdinand and the girls had yoked old Disa to a sledge and gone off to Munkerud to borrow some. The Captain was out shooting, and would probably bring home some tough old hare which required more butter in the cooking than it was worth. This was what he considered "provisioning the family"! But, anyway, it was bet-

ter than returning with a wretched fox—the worst animal created, useless both living and dead.

And Fru Uggla? She had not left her room yet. She was in bed reading a novel, as she did every morning. An angel, such as she was, could not be expected to do any work.

No, that must be done by those who are old and grey like Mamsell Ulrika. Day and night she was on her feet trying to keep things together. It was no easy task; it was but the truth that they had had no meat but bear hams all the winter. She certainly expected no great wages—she had seen none as yet—but they would not turn her out when she grew too old to earn her bread. Even a housekeeper was considered a human being here, and they would certainly give old Ulrika a decent funeral when the time came, if there was any money with which to buy a coffin.

"For no one can say what may happen," she said, drying her eyes, which always overflowed so easily. "We are in debt to that wicked Sintram, and he can sell us up any day. True, Ferdinand is now engaged to Anna Stjärnhök, and she is rich, but she will very soon tire of him. And then what is to become of us and our three cows and nine horses, our light-hearted girls who only think of going from one ball to another, our fields where nothing grows, our kind, good-natured Ferdinand who never will be quite a man? What will become

of this whole blessed house, where everything except work thrives so contentedly?"

But the dinner-hour came, and the family assembled. Ferdinand, the quiet son of the house, and his sisters arrived with the borrowed horse-radish. The Captain, coming home from his shooting, had taken a dip in the ice-covered river, and came in hearty and strong, wrung Gösta's hand, and threw up the windows to let in the fresh air. Fru Uggla appeared, dressed in silk, with wide lace falling over the white hands which Gösta was allowed to kiss.

They all welcomed him gladly, jokes passed from one to the other, and they laughingly teased him.

"Well, how are you all at Ekeby—how do you like the promised land?"

"It flows with milk and honey," he answered. "We empty the mountains of their iron, and fill our cellars with wine. The fields bear gold with which we gild life's misery, and we fell our forests to build pavilions and skittle-alleys."

But Fru Uggla sighed and smiled, and one word escaped her lips—"Poet."

"There are many sins on my conscience," answered Gösta, "but I 've never written a line of poetry."

"But still you are a poet, Gösta—you can't rid yourself of that name. You have lived through more poems than our poets have ever written."

And later, the Captain's wife spoke to him, mildly as a mother, about his wilfully wasted life. "May I live to see you become a man," she said; and Gösta felt the sweetness of being reproached by this gentle woman, who was his faithful friend, whose romantic heart was fired by the love of great deeds.

But when the merry meal was over, the cabbages and fritters, the horse-radish and Christmas ale enjoyed, and Gösta had made them laugh and cry with his tales of the Major and his wife and the Broby parson, sleigh-bells were heard in the yard, and a moment later Sintram entered the room.

He shone with satisfaction from the top of his bald head down to his long, flat feet. He swung his arms, and made such grimaces, it was evident he brought bad news.

"Have you heard," he cried,—"have you heard that the banns were called to-day at Svartsjö Church for Anna Stjärnhök and rich old Dahlberg? She must have forgotten that she was engaged to Ferdinand!"

No, they had not heard; they were all astonished and grieved. They already saw their home ravaged to pay the debt due to their cruel neighbor, their dearly loved horses sold, even the poor furniture which had come to them from their mother's old home. Their life of festivity and balls was over now—they must eat bear-meat again, and the young people must seek work among strangers.

Fru Uggla caressed Ferdinand, and let him feel the comfort of a never-failing love.

And the unconquerable Gösta Berling sat there among them with a thousand schemes surging in his brain.

"Listen," he cried; "this isn't the time for mourning. It is the parson's wife down at Svartsjö who has arranged it all. She has great influence over Anna since she has been living with her at the parsonage. It is she who has persuaded her to give up Ferdinand and take old Dahlberg; but they are not married yet, nor ever shall be. I am going to Borg; I will meet Anna there and talk to her. I will carry her away from the parsonage and old Dahlberg. I will bring her here to-night, and then he will not see much more of her."

So it was decided. Gösta drove alone to Borg, instead of taking one of the girls with him, but the best wishes of all followed him on his way. Sintram, rejoicing that old Dahlberg was to be outwitted, determined to remain where he was and see Gösta return with the faithless beauty. In a sudden outburst of kindness he even wrapped about Gösta his green travelling-rug—a present given him by Mamsell Ulrika.

But Fru Uggla came out on the steps with three small red bound books in her hand. "Take them," she said to Gösta, who was already seated in his sledge. "Take and keep them in case you fail. It is

Corinne, Madame de Staël's *Corinne*. I don't wish it to be sold at auction."

"I won't fail."

"Oh, Gösta, Gösta!" she said, and passed her hand over his uncovered head. "You strongest and weakest of men! For how long will you remember that the happiness of these poor people lies in your hands?"

Drawn by black Don Juan and followed by Tankred, Gösta again flew along the highway, the spirit of adventure flooding his soul. He felt himself a conqueror, borne forward by enthusiasm. The road took him past the parsonage at Svartsjö. He drove through the gate and asked if he might drive Anna Stjärnhök to the ball, and she consented. It was a lovely, self-willed girl who took her seat beside him. Who would not gladly ride behind Don Juan?

The young people were silent at first; then Anna opened the conversation—defiantly, as usual. "I suppose you heard what the pastor gave out in church to-day?"

"Did he say you were the loveliest girl between Löfven and Klarälfven?"

"How stupid you are! People knew that without his telling them. He published the banns for me and old Dahlberg."

"It is hardly likely I should have asked you to drive with me if I had known."

And Anna carelessly answered, "I daresay I could have done without you, Gösta Berling."

"But it is a great pity, Anna," Gösta said, thoughtfully, "that your parents are not living. Now you do what you like, and no one can depend on you."

"It is a greater pity you did not say so before; some one else could have driven me to the ball."

"The parson's wife must be of my opinion, that you require some one to take your father's place, or she would not have paired you off with an old creature like Dahlberg."

"The parson's wife had nothing to do with it."

"Dear me! was he really your own choice?"

"He is not marrying me for my money."

"No, of course not; it is only blue eyes and rosy cheeks that old men run after, and it becomes them finely."

"Gösta, are n't you ashamed of yourself?"

"Well, you must remember now that you have nothing further to do with young men. There will be an end now to your dancing and amusements. Your place will be on the sofa-corner, or perhaps you mean to play cribbage with your old man?"

They were silent after this, till they began the steep ascent to Borg Hall.

"Thanks for your trouble! It will be some time before I sleigh again with Gösta Berling," said Anna.

"Thanks for that promise! There are many, I

know, who have repented the day they ever went sleighing with you."

It was in no mild frame of mind that the defiant beauty entered the ball-room and glanced over the assembled guests. The first she saw was Dahlberg, small and bald, standing by the side of the tall, slight, fair-haired Gösta. She felt she could have turned them both out of the room.

Dahlberg came and invited her to dance—to be met with cutting astonishment.

"Are you going to dance? You don't usually do so!"

Her girl friends came forward to congratulate her.

"Don't pretend, girls; you know very well no one could fall in love with old Dahlberg. We are both rich, and it is therefore a suitable match."

The matrons pressed her hand and spoke of life's greatest happiness.

"Congratulate the pastor's wife," she said. "She is more delighted about it than I am."

There stood Gösta Berling, the gay cavalier, welcomed by all for his bright smile and his ready speech, which strewed gold-dust over life's grey way. It seemed to her that she had never really seen him before. He was no outcast, no homeless jester—he was a king among men, a born king.

Gösta and the other young men made a compact against her; she must be taught the wrong she did

in giving herself, with lovely face and great wealth, to an old man. And they let her sit out ten dances.

She was furious.

At the eleventh dance a man of the most insignificant appearance, one with whom no one else cared to dance, approached her and invited her to waltz.

"As the bread is finished, the crusts must be brought on the table," she said.

Then they played forfeits. Fair-haired girls put their heads together and sentenced her to kiss the one she loved the best, waiting, with covert smiles, to see the proud beauty kiss old Dahlberg.

But she rose, stately in her anger, and said, "Shall I not rather box the ears of him I love the least?"

And the next moment Gösta's cheek burned from the stroke of her firm hand.

He flushed red, controlling himself, caught her hand, and holding it fast a moment, whispered, "Meet me in the red drawing-room downstairs in half an hour."

His blue eyes held her in magic fetters; she felt she must obey.

She met him there, proud and angry.

"What concern is it of yours, Gösta Berling, whom I marry?"

He could not speak kindly to her yet, nor did he think it good policy to mention Ferdinand at once.

"To sit out ten dances seems to me a light pen-

ance, but you want to break your promise without being censured? If a better man than I had passed sentence, it would have been severer."

"What have I done to you all that you cannot leave me in peace? It is because I have money that you persecute me so. I will throw it into the Löfven, and who likes can fish it up."

She hid her eyes in her hands and cried with vexation.

This touched him; he felt ashamed of his severity, and his voice grew caressing as he continued:

"Oh, child, forgive me, forgive poor Gösta Berling! You know very well that no one minds what I say or do! Who cares for such a wretch as I am? Who cares for my anger? You might as well cry over a gnat-bite! I was mad, but I wished to hinder our most beautiful and richest girl from marrying an old man. And now I have only hurt you."

He sat down on the sofa beside her, and put his arms round her, trying to support and raise her.

She did not draw back; she turned to him, and throwing her arms round his neck, wept, with her lovely head on his shoulder.

Ah, poet—strongest and weakest of men—it was not about your neck those arms should rest.

"If I had known this," she whispered, "I would never have consented to marry old Dahlberg. I have seen you for the first time to-day, and there is none like you."

Through white lips Gösta whispered, "Ferdinand."

She silenced him with a kiss.

"He is nothing — no one exists but you. I shall be faithful to you alone."

"I am Gösta Berling," he answered, gloomily; "you cannot marry me."

"It is you I love — you, the noblest of men. You need do nothing, be nothing, you are born a king."

The poet's blood in him surged. She was so enchanting in her love, he clasped her in his arms.

"If you will be mine, Anna, you cannot stay at the parsonage. Let me carry you away to-night to Ekeby, and I will guard you there till we can be married."

. . . .

It was a wild drive through the night. Prompted by the voice of their love they let Don Juan carry them away. The creaking of the sledge runners might have been the cries of their deceived friends, what cared they? She clung to him, and he bent down and whispered in her ear, "Can any bliss be likened to stolen happiness?"

Who thought of the banns — they had love — and of the anger of their friends? Gösta Berling believed in fate. Fate had mastered them — no one could fight against fate.

If the stars had been the wax candles lighted for

her wedding, if the sleigh-bells had been the church chimes calling the neighbors to witness her union with old Dahlberg, still she must have eloped with Gösta Berling, so powerful is fate.

They had passed the parsonage and Munkerud. They had about two miles before them to Berga, and then two again to Ekeby. The road followed the edge of the wood, and to the right of them lay dark mountains, to the left a long white valley.

Suddenly Tankred rushed after the sledge wildly. He seemed to lie at full stretch upon the ground, he passed over it so quickly, and shuddering with fear he leaped into the sledge and crouched at Anna's feet.

Don Juan started and broke into a gallop.

"Wolves," said Gösta.

They saw a long grey line following them near the fence. There were at least a dozen wolves.

Anna was not afraid. The day had been full of adventure, the night promised to be the same. That was life—to speed over the sparkling snow, defiant of men and beasts.

Gösta swore, bent forward, and brought the whip heavily over Don Juan.

"Are you afraid?" she asked.

"They are taking a short cut to that corner and will meet us where the road turns."

Don Juan was putting forth all his speed in the race with the wild beasts, and Tankred howled in

mingled fear and rage. They reached the turning at the same time as the wolves, and Gösta drove off the foremost with his whip.

"Ah, Don Juan, my boy, how easily you would outstrip your pursuers if you had not to carry us with you!"

They fastened the green travelling-rug behind the sledge. The wolves were frightened, and kept at a distance for a short time, but they soon conquered their fear, and one of them sprang with panting open jaws at the sledge, and Gösta flung Madame de Staël's *Corinne* down its throat.

Again they had a moment's respite while this booty was devoured, but soon the wolves began to tear at the rug, their quick breathing was heard behind. They knew there was no shelter to be hoped for before they reached Berga, but worse than death itself was the thought to Gösta of seeing the people he had betrayed. He knew also that Don Juan could not hold out much longer, and what was to become of them?

Now they saw the Berga farmstead in the forest clearing. Lights streamed from the windows. Gösta knew too well for whose sake.

Just then the wolves fled, fearing the neighborhood of man, and Gösta drove past Berga; but he did not get far, for, where the road turned into the forest again, he saw a dark group fronting him—the wolves awaited them.

"We must return to the parsonage, and say we went for a sleigh ride in the starlight. This won't do."

They turned, but the next moment the sledge was surrounded by the savage beasts. Grey bodies pressed near, white teeth gleamed, glaring eyes flashed; they howled with hunger and the thirst of blood. Their white teeth were ready to tear into soft human flesh. They sprang upon Don Juan, and hung to the harness. Anna sat and wondered if they would be eaten up entirely, or if people would find their torn limbs in the bloody trampled snow next morning.

"It is a case of life and death now," she said, bending down and grasping Tankred by his collar.

"Let him be, it would not help us. It isn't for his sake the wolves are abroad to-night."

And Gösta drove into the yard at Berga, the wolves following them to the very steps, so that he was obliged to beat them off with the whip.

"Anna," he said, as they reached the door, "it is not God's will. Keep a good countenance now, if you are the woman I think you."

The sleigh-bells had been heard indoors, and all the household came to meet them.

"He has brought her!" they cried, "he has brought her! Long live Gösta Berling!"

And they passed from one embrace to another. Many questions were not asked. It was late; their

perilous drive had unnerved them, and they needed rest. It was sufficient for them all that Anna had come. All was well, only *Corinne* and the green travelling-rug, Mamsell Ulrika's prized gift, had been lost in the struggle.

. . . .

The whole house lay in sleep when Gösta Berling rose and crept downstairs. Unobserved by any one, he took Don Juan out of the stable, yoked him to his sledge, and was on the point of driving away when Anna Stjärnhök came out of the house.

"I heard you go out," she said, "so I got up also. I am ready to go with you."

He went up to her and took her hand.

"Don't you understand yet, Anna? It cannot be. It is not God's will. I was here to-day to dinner and heard their trouble about your faithlessness, and I drove to Borg to bring you back to Ferdinand. But I never have been anything but a good-for-nothing, and never will be anything else. I deceived him and took you for myself. My old friend here believed me to be a true man, and I have deceived her. And another poor creature suffers cold and hunger cheerfully to die among friends, and I was ready to let Sintram turn her out. You were so beautiful, and sin is so pleasant, and Gösta Berling is so easily tempted! Ah, what a wretch I am! I know how they love their home, and I was about

to let it be ruined! I forgot all for your sake, you were so lovely. But now, Anna, since I have seen their joy I cannot keep you—no, I will not. Oh, my beloved! He above us plays with our wills. The time has come for us to bow under His chastening hand. Promise me that from this hour you will take your burden upon you. All in this house depend on you. Promise me that you will be their help and stay! If you love me, if you will lighten my heavy grief, promise me this! My dearest, is your heart so great that it can conquer itself and yet smile?"

And she received with ecstasy the call to sacrifice.

"I will do as you will—I will sacrifice myself cheerfully."

"And you will not hate my poor friends?"

She smiled sadly.

"As long as I love you, I shall love them."

"Now I know what a woman you are. Oh! it is hard to leave you."

"Farewell, Gösta; God be with you. My love shall not tempt you to sin."

She turned to go in; he followed her.

"Will you soon forget me, Anna?"

"Go now, Gösta, we are but human!"

He threw himself into the sledge, then she came again to him.

"Have you forgotten the wolves?"

"I am thinking of them, but they have done their

work. They have nothing further to do with me to-night."

Again he stretched out his arms to her, but Don Juan grew impatient and started. He let the reins hang, turning to look back, then leaned against the back of the sledge and wept like a man in despair.

"I had my happiness in my hand, and I have thrown it aside! I have cast it away myself! Why did I not keep it?"

Ah, Gösta Berling, thou strongest and weakest of men!

The Cachucha

WAR horse, war horse, old steed now tethered in the field, do you remember your youth?

Do you remember the day of the battle, when you charged as if borne on wings, your mane flaring above you like flickering flames, your black chest glistening with frothy foam and splashes of blood? In harness of gold you bounded forward, the earth rumbling beneath you; and you trembled with joy, brave old steed. Ah, but you were splendid!

It is the hour of twilight in the cavaliers' wing. In the big room the cavaliers' chests stand against the wall, and their holiday clothes hang on hooks in a corner. The firelight from the hearth plays on the whitewashed walls and the checkered yellow curtains that hide the cubby-beds. The cavaliers' wing is no royal antechamber, no seraglio with cushioned divans and soft pillows.

Up there Lilliecrona's violin is heard. He, Lilliecrona, is playing the cachucha in the dusk of the evening; and he plays it over and over again.

Cut the strings! Break the bow! Why does he play that accursed dance? Why does he play it when Ensign Örneclou lies sick with the pains of gout, so severe that he cannot move in his bed! Snatch the fiddle from him and dash it against the wall, if he will not stop.

Master, is it for us you play the cachucha? Shall it be danced on the shaky floor of the cavaliers' wing, between narrow walls, blackened with smoke and grimy with dirt, under this low ceiling?

The cachucha, is it for us—for us cavaliers? Without howls the snowstorm. Would you teach the snowflakes to dance to the measure? Are you playing for the light-footed children of the storm?

Tremulous feminine forms, with hot blood throbbing in their veins, small sooty hands that have thrown aside the pot to take up the castanets, bare feet under tucked-up skirts, crouching gypsies with bagpipe and tambourine, Moorish arcades, marble-paved courts, moonlight and dark eyes—have you these, master? Else let the violin rest.

The cavaliers must dry their wet clothes by the fire. Shall they whirl about in top-boots, with spiked heels and soles an inch thick? All day they have plowed through knee-deep snow to reach the bear's lair. Think you they will dance in wet, reeking woollen clothes, with shaggy bruin for partner?

An evening sky glittering with stars, dark hair adorned with red roses, an atmosphere vibrant with blissful longing, untutored grace of movement, love rising from the earth, raining from the heavens, floating in the air—can you conjure these, master? Else, why make us yearn for such things?

Most cruel of men, would you sound the battle call to a tethered war horse! Rutger von Örneclou

is fettered to his bed with gout. Spare him the pain of tender memories!

He, too, has worn the sombrero and the hair-net of many colors; he, too, has worn the velvet jacket and carried a stiletto in his girdle. Spare old Örneclou, master.

But Lilliecrona goes on playing the cachucha, and Örneclou suffers like the lover who sees the swallow winging toward the distant abode of the beloved, like the hart driven by the hounds past the cooling spring.

For a moment Lilliecrona raises his chin from the violin.

"Ensign, do you remember Rosalie von Berger?" he asks.

Örneclou swears a great oath.

"She was light as a candle-flame, and danced and sparkled like the diamond at the tip of the fiddle-bow. You must remember her at the theatre in Karlstad. We saw her when we were young, if you recall."

The ensign remembered. She was *petite* and bewitching—all fire. Ah, *she* could dance the cachucha! And she taught all the young men in Karlstad to dance it and to play the castanets. At the Governor's ball the ensign and Fröken von Berger danced a *pas de deux* in Spanish costume. And he had danced as one dances under fig-trees and magnolias, like the Spaniard—the real Spaniard. No one in all Värmland could dance the cachucha as

he danced it. What a cavalier was lost to Värmland when the gout stiffened his legs and great lumps formed on his joints! And what a gallant figure he had once been, so lithe, so handsome, so courtly! "Handsome Örneclou" he was called by the young girls, who were ready to start a deadly feud over a dance with him.

Lilliecrona again begins the cachucha, and Örneclou is carried back to other times. . . . Here he stands, there she — Rosalie von Berger! He is a Spanish lover, she a Spanish maiden. But a moment ago they were alone in the dressing-room. He was allowed to kiss her, but lightly, lest his blackened moustaches print a telltale mark on her cheek.

Now they dance! As one dances under fig-trees and plane-trees, so they dance. She draws away, he follows; he grows bold, she haughty; he is hurt, she solicitous. When at the end he falls on his knee and receives her in his outstretched arms, a sigh sweeps through the ball-room, a sigh of rapture. He was the Spaniard to the life. At just that stroke of the bow he had bent so, had put out his arms so, and poised his foot so, to glide forward on his toes. Such grace! What a model for a sculptor!

He does not know how it happened, but somehow he had got his foot over the edge of the bed and was standing up. Now he bends, raises his arms, snaps his fingers, and tries to glide across the floor

as in the days gone by, when he wore patent leather shoes, so tight-fitting that the feet of his stockings had to be cut away.

Bravo, Örneclou! *Bravo*, Lilliecrona, play life into him!

But his foot fails him, he cannot rise on his toes. He kicks out once or twice — more he cannot do — and falls back on the bed.

Handsome Señor, you have grown old. Perhaps the Señorita, too, is old?

It is only under the plane-trees of Granada that the cachucha is danced by ever young *gitanas* — ever young because, as with the roses, each year brings new ones.

So now the time has come to cut the violin strings. . . . No, no! play on, Lilliecrona, play the cachucha, always the cachucha! Teach us that although our bodies have grown heavy and our joints stiff, in our feelings we are ever the same — ever Spaniards.

War horse, war horse, say that you love the trumpet-blast, which tempts you into a gallop, even though you strain at your steel-linked tether till your foot bleeds.

The Ball at Ekeby

OH, women of the olden days! To talk of you is to talk of Paradise; for you were perfect beauty, perfect light—ever youthful, ever charming, and as mild as the eyes of a mother when she gazes at her child. Soft as a little squirrel, you clung about man's neck, and your voice never shook with anger, your brow was never ruffled, your soft hand never grew harsh and hard. Like lovely saints, like bejewelled pictures, you stood in the temple of your homes. Incense and prayers were offered you, love worked its miracles by your power, and round your heads poetry cast its aureola.

Oh, women of the olden days! This is the story of how one of you gave her love to Gösta Berling.

Scarcely had Anna Stjärnhök's kisses died on his lips, scarcely had he forgotten the pressure of her arms around his neck, but sweeter lips and whiter arms were stretched toward him. He could do nothing but receive the loveliest of gifts, for the heart is incorrigible in its habit of loving. For every sorrow caused by love, it knows no other cure than a newer love, as those who have burned themselves with hot iron deaden the pain by burning themselves once more.

A fortnight after the ball at Borg a great festival was given at Ekeby.

It was a splendid fête, but ask not why or wherefore it was given. For the only reason for which a fête is worth giving—that eyes might shine, and hearts and feet might dance, and joy might again find a place among mankind; that hands might meet, and lips might kiss.

But speak not of kisses!

And what a fête it was! Old men and women became young again and laughed and rejoiced when they spoke of it. But then the cavaliers were sole managers at Ekeby.

Fru Samzelius wandered through the country with her beggar's scrip and staff, and the Major was at Sjö. He could not be present at the ball, for small-pox had broken out at Sjö, and he was afraid of carrying infection.

What a number of enjoyments were crowded into those twelve hours, from the first popping of the corks of the first bottles of wine at the dinner to the last strain of the violins when midnight was long passed! They sank back into eternity, those mirth-crowned hours, frenzied with the fiery wine, the choicest food, the loveliest music, the cleverest acting, and the most beautiful tableaux. They sank back, giddy with the wild dancing. Where was there so smooth a floor, such courtly cavaliers, such lovely women?

Oh, women of the olden days! You knew well how to brighten the feasts. Streams of fire, of genius,

and of youthful ardor touch all who approach you, It was worth while to spend one's gold on the candles that lighted up your beauty, upon the wine that awoke the gaiety in your hearts. It was worth while to dance one's shoes to dust, and to wield the violin bow till the arm dropped with weariness.

Oh, women of the olden days! You held the keys of Paradise; the halls of Ekeby were thronged by the loveliest of your train.

There was the young Countess Dohna, excitedly eager for dancing and all games, as was natural for her twenty years; there were the lovely daughters of the Judge of Munkerud and the girls from Berga; there was Anna Stjärnhök, a thousand times more beautiful than before, in the quiet melancholy which had come over her since the night she had been chased by wolves; there were many who are not forgotten yet, but who soon will be; and there, too, was the beautiful Marienne Sinclaire.

Even she, the loveliest of the lovely, a queen among people, the goddess-like, the fascinating Marienne Sinclaire, deigned to come. She, the far-famed beauty, who had shone at court and at many a ducal castle, the queen of beauty, who received the homage of the whole country — she, who ignited the fires of love wherever she showed herself — she had deigned to appear at the ball given by the cavaliers.

The honor of Värmland beamed afar in those

days, borne up by many a haughty name. There was much which its joyous children prided themselves upon. But ever when they talked of their many splendors, they spoke of Marienne Sinclaire.

The story of her conquests filled the land. They told you of many earls whose coronets might have graced her head, of the many millions which had been laid at her feet, of the brave swords and the poet's wreaths which had allured her.

And she possessed more than mere beauty. She was talented and learned. The best men of the time were happy to converse with her. She did not write, but many of her thoughts given to the souls of her friends have lived again in song.

To Värmland—to the bear-land—she came but seldom. Her time was spent in constant visits. Her father, the rich Melchior Sinclaire, lived with his wife at Björne, and allowed Marienne to travel about to her grand friends in the towns or to the great estates. He took pleasure in relating how much money she spent, and both the old people lived happily in the reflected glory of Marienne's splendor.

Her life was one of pleasure and adoration. The air about her was love. Love was her light and her life, and love her daily bread. She had been in love herself often—oh, so often!—but never had this love lasted for a sufficiently long time that out of it might be forged the chains that should bind for life.

"I am waiting for him—the grand conqueror," she used to say in speaking of love. "He has stormed no walls and surmounted no graves as yet. He has come tamely to me, having neither wildness in his eyes nor daring in his heart. I am waiting for the mighty one who will carry me out of myself. I want to feel the love so strong within me that I tremble before it. I only know the kind of love at which my intellect smiles."

She had the low voice and the refinement of a woman of high rank. They all bowed down to her in her country home, and felt their insignificance and ignorance of the ways of the fine world, but if she spoke, if she only smiled—all was well. She was a queen, and created a court and courtly manners wherever she went.

Her presence gave inspiration to the speeches and life to the wine. She gave speed to the violin bows, and the dancing went gayer than ever over the boards that she touched with her slender feet. She shone in the tableaux and in the acting.

Oh, no, it was not her fault—it was never her fault.

It was the balcony, the moonlight, the lace veil, and the cavalier dress that were to blame. The poor young people were innocent.

All that now follows, which led to so much unhappiness, was done with the best intention. Squire Julius, who could manage anything, had arranged

a tableau chiefly that Marienne should be seen in great splendor.

Before a stage erected in the big salon at Ekeby sat a hundred guests, and watched a golden Spanish moon rise in a dark midnight sky. Then a Don Juan stole through the Seville street till he paused beneath a myrtle-covered balcony. He was disguised as a monk, but a white embroidered ruffle showed at his sleeve, and the gleaming point of a rapier protruded from his cloak.

He raised his voice and sang:

"*I kiss no maiden dear,*
Nor press my lips to a flagon's rim
To taste the purling wine.
A cheek so clear
Set on fire by my glance,
Sweet eyes, seeking mine
As if by chance—
Such worldly pleasures are not for me.

"*Come not in your beauty's might,*
Señora, to the lattice here,
I tremble at your sight.
I wear the cowl
And the rosary long,
To the Madonna still
Does my heart belong;
In the water cruse I must drown my song."

When his voice died away, Marienne came out upon the balcony dressed in black velvet and a lace veil. She leaned over the rail and sang slowly and ironically:

> "*Why do you stand, you holy man,*
> *At midnight time, 'neath my lattice high,*
> *Say, do you pray for my soul?*"

Then quickly, and with feeling:

> "*Nay, fly,—I pray;*
> *They may find you here.*
> *And your sword doth betray,*
> *And the clank of your spur,*
> *That the hooded monk is a fair cavalier.*"

At these words the monk threw aside his disguise, and Gösta Berling stood under the balcony in a Don's dress of silk and gold. He paid no heed to the beauty's warning. On the contrary, he climbed one of the balcony pillars, swung himself over the balustrade, and, as Squire Julius had arranged, fell at the feet of the lovely Marienne.

She smiled graciously upon him and gave him her hand to kiss, and as they gazed at each other, lost in love, the curtain descended.

No one at Ekeby had ever seen anything lovelier than those two on that moonlit balcony. The curtain had to be drawn up again and again. It was

like a thunder-cloud, out of which heaven's splendor gleamed, and every glance was followed by a deafening thunder of applause.

She was lovely, so wonderfully lovely, that Marienne. She had fair hair, and dark blue eyes under her dark eyebrows. The curve of her nose was incomparable in its audacity and refinement; her mouth and cheeks and chin were perfectly formed. Beside hers, all other faces looked coarse, and near her transparent complexion all others seemed dark and ugly. There was charm, too, in every glance, in every word, in every movement of the stately figure.

And before her knelt Gösta Berling, with a face as spiritual as a poet's and as daring as a conqueror's, with eyes that glittered with genius and humor, eyes that pleaded and insisted. He was strong and supple, fiery and fascinating.

While the curtain rose and fell, the young people stood motionless in the same attitude. Gösta's eyes held Marienne; they pleaded and insisted.

At last the applause died away, the curtain descended, and none saw them.

And then Marienne bent and kissed Gösta Berling. She did not know why she did it—she felt she must. He stretched his arms about her head and held her fast, and she kissed him again and again.

But it was the balcony and the moonlight. It was the veil and the cavalier dress, the song and

the applause, that were to blame; the poor young people were not in fault. They had not intended it. She had not refused the hands of earls and rejected millions for love of Gösta Berling, neither had he forgotten Anna Stjärnhök. No, they were not to blame, they had not meant to do it.

It was the gentle Lövenborg, he with the tears in his eyes and a smile on his lips, who acted as curtain-puller that evening. Troubled by the memories of many sorrows, he paid little attention to the things of this world, and had never learned to manage them properly. Now, when he saw that Gösta and Marienne had taken up a new position, he thought it was part of the tableau, and he pulled up the curtain.

They on the balcony noticed nothing till the thunder of applause again deafened them.

Marienne started and tried to escape, but Gösta held her firmly, whispering, "Stand still, they think it part of the tableau."

He felt how her body trembled, and the glow of her kisses died on her lips. They were obliged to stand like this while the curtain again rose and fell, and every time a hundred pairs of eyes saw them, a hundred pairs of hands gave forth a storm of applause, for it was a lovely sight to see two so beautiful give a representation of love's happiness. No one thought those kisses meant anything but a theatrical pretence; no one guessed that the Señora

shook with shame and the Don with anxiety. No one but believed it to be a part of the tableau.

At last Marienne and Gösta stood behind the scenes. She passed her hand over her forehead. "I don't understand myself," she said.

"For shame, Fröken Marienne," he said, with a grimace and a comic gesture of his arms, "to kiss Gösta Berling! for shame!"

She was obliged to laugh.

"One and all know Gösta Berling to be irresistible. My fault is no greater than that of others."

And they agreed to keep a good countenance, so that none should guess the truth.

"Can I be certain that the truth will never come out, Herr Gösta?" she asked, as they were about to join the other guests.

"You can, Fröken Marienne; the cavaliers will be silent, I can answer for them."

She dropped her eyes, and a peculiar smile curled her lips.

"And if the truth came out, what would people think of me, Herr Berling?"

"They would think nothing of it. They would know it meant nothing. They would think we were in our parts and continued to act."

Yet another question came creeping from the hidden eyes and the forced smile.

"But you, Herr Gösta? What do you think of it?"

"I think you are in love with me," he said, jestingly.

"Don't believe anything of the kind," she smiled, "or I shall be obliged to thrust this dagger into you to prove that you are wrong."

"Women's kisses are dear," said Gösta. "Does it cost a life to be kissed by Marienne Sinclaire?"

A glance flashed from her eyes, so sharp that he felt it like a blow.

"I would rather see you dead, Gösta Berling—dead—dead!"

These words awoke the old longing in the heart of the poet.

"Ah," he said, "if your words were more than words, if they were bullets out of a dark thicket, if they were daggers or poison, and had the power to destroy this wretched body and give my soul its freedom!"

But she was again calm and smiling. "Childishness!" she said, and took his arm to rejoin the guests.

They retained their costumes, and their triumph was renewed when they showed themselves. All praised them, no one suspected anything.

The ball began again, but Gösta shunned the dancing-room. His heart was smarting from Marienne's glance as if it had touched it like sharp steel. He understood too well the meaning of her words. It was a shame to love him, a shame to be loved by

him — a shame greater than death. He would never dance again; he never wanted to see them again, those beautiful women. He knew it well — those lovely eyes, those rosy cheeks, burned not for him. Not for him was the fall of those light feet nor the chime of that low laughter. Yes, dance with him, flirt with him — that they would do, but none of them would seriously have chosen to give him her love.

The poet went away to the smoking-room, to the old gentlemen, and took his place at one of the card-tables. He happened to sit down near the master of Björne, who was playing "Knack," with an occasional turn at "Polish Bank," and had gathered a whole pile of sixpences and farthings before him. The stakes were already high, and Gösta drove them higher. The green bank notes came out, and the heaps of money increased before Melchior Sinclaire. But before Gösta, too, a pile of silver and paper gathered, and soon he was the only one who could hold out against the great land proprietor of Björne. Soon even Melchior Sinclaire's pile retreated over to Gösta.

"Gösta, my boy," said his opponent, laughing, when he had lost all he had in his purse and pocket-book, "what are we to do now? I am cleaned out, and I never play with borrowed money. I promised my mother I never would."

But he found a way — he gambled away his watch

and chain and his beaver cloak, and was on the point of staking his horse and sledge when Sintram interrupted him.

"Put up something to change the luck," was the advice of the wicked owner of Fors; "put up something to win."

"The devil knows where I am to find it!"

"Stake your heart's dearest treasure, brother Melchior—stake your daughter."

"You can do that without fear," said Gösta, laughing; "that stake I shall never take home."

The great Melchior Sinclaire could do nothing else than laugh also. He did not approve of Marienne's name being mentioned at the gaming-table, but the idea was so absurdly improbable he could not be angry. Stake and lose Marienne to Gösta? Yes, he could dare that.

"That is to say," he explained, "that if you can get her consent, I will set my blessing on the marriage on this card."

Gösta staked all his gains, and the game began. He won, and the proprietor of Björne gave up playing. He could not fight against Fortune, he saw.

Well, Gösta Berling, does not your heart beat at this? Don't you understand your fate? What was the meaning of Marienne's kisses and her anger? Don't you understand a woman's heart? And now this stake won too! Don't you see that fate wills what love wills? Up, Gösta Berling!

No, Gösta Berling is not in the mood for love-making to-night. He is angry over the hardness of hearts. Why should love only be healed by love? He knows too well the end of these pretty ditties. No one is constant to him; there is love for him, but no wife. It is no use trying.

The night goes on, midnight has passed. The ladies' cheeks begin to pale, their curls to straighten, their flounces to look creased. The matrons rise from the sofa-corners and remark that, as the fête has continued for twelve hours, it is time to go home.

And that would have been the end of the great ball, if Lilliecrona had not taken up his violin and played a last polka. The horses stood at the door, the old ladies were putting on their furs and quilted hoods, and the old gentlemen buttoned up their greatcoats and tied on their belts, but the young people could not tear themselves away from the dancing. They danced in their cloaks; they danced ring polka, swing polka, and every kind of polka; it was all one mad whirl. As soon as a man gave up his partner, another sprang forward and claimed her.

Even melancholy Gösta was drawn into the vortex. He meant to dance away his sadness and sense of degradation, he wanted to feel the wild joy of life in his veins again—he meant to be gay, he, as well as the others—and he danced so that the

walls seemed to spin round, and his thoughts grew giddy.

Ah, who is the lady he has snatched from the crowd?

She is light and graceful, and he feels streams of fire flow between them. Oh, Marienne!

While Gösta danced with Marienne, Sintram was sitting already in his sledge in the courtyard, and near him stood Melchior Sinclaire.

The great land proprietor was impatient at having to wait for Marienne. He stamped on the snow with his big boots, and swung his arms, for it was bitterly cold.

"Perhaps, after all, you should not have gambled Marienne away to Gösta," said Sintram.

"Why not?"

Sintram put his reins in order and lifted his whip before he answered: "All that kissing did not belong to the tableau!"

Melchior Sinclaire raised his arm to strike, but Sintram was gone. He started his horse at racing speed, not daring to look back, for Melchior Sinclaire had a heavy hand and but short patience.

The master of Björne went back to the dancing-hall and saw Marienne and Gösta dancing together. The last polka was wildly, crazily danced. Some of the couples were pale, some blooming red, the dust hung like smoke over the room. The waxen lights burned low in the candlesticks, and amid all this

ghost-like decay, Gösta and Marienne flew on and on, royal in their unwearied strength, with no blemish marring their beauty, happy in being able to indulge in the entrancing movement.

Melchior Sinclaire watched them for a time, then he went away and left Marienne to dance. He slammed the door after him, stamped down the steps, and without further ado seated himself in the sledge, where his wife already waited, and drove home.

When Marienne finished dancing and asked for her parents, they were gone.

When she was certain of this, she allowed no one to see her surprise. She dressed quietly, and went down into the courtyard, and the ladies in the dressing-room thought she had her own sledge waiting for her.

But in her thin, silk slippers, she was hurrying home without telling any one of her trouble. No one knew her in the darkness as she walked on the roadside; no one could think the tramp, who was driven deep into the snowdrifts by passing sledges, was beautiful Marienne Sinclaire.

When she could go securely along the middle of the road, she began to run. She ran as long as she could, then walked, then ran again. A miserable, aching fear drove her forward.

From Ekeby to Björne is about a mile and a half. Marienne was soon home, and yet she almost felt

she had come to the wrong place—for all the doors were closed, and all the lights were out—she wondered if her parents had not yet arrived.

She went forward and knocked loudly at the hall door. She clutched the latch and shook it till it resounded all over the house. No one came to open, but when she dropped the iron latch which she had held, it tore away the frozen skin from her fingers.

Melchior Sinclaire had gone home to bar the door against his only daughter.

He was intoxicated with much drinking, wild with anger. He hated his daughter because she loved Gösta Berling. Now he had locked the servants into the kitchen and his wife into her bedroom, and he swore a solemn oath to them that he would kill any one who let Marienne in.

They knew he always kept his word. No one had ever seen him so furious. No such sorrow had ever touched him. If his daughter had come before him, it is probable he would have killed her.

He had given her jewels and silken dresses; he had let her learn all culture and wisdom. She had been his pride, his honor. He had rejoiced over her as if she wore a crown. She was his queen, his goddess, his adored, proud, beautiful Marienne! Had he ever grudged her anything? Had he not always felt himself to be too coarse to be her father? Ah, Marienne!

Ought he not to hate her when she fell in love

with Gösta Berling and kissed him? Ought he not to turn her out and bar his doors upon her, when she had dishonored her grandeur by loving such a man? If she stayed at Ekeby, or if she crept away to some of the neighbors to get a lodging for the night, if she slept in the snowdrift, it was all the same, she was already trampled in the dirt, his lovely Marienne. Her glory was gone; the glory of his life was gone too.

He lay in his bed and heard her knocking at the door. What did it matter to him? Some one stood there who was ready to marry an unfrocked parson—he had no home for such a woman. If he had loved her less, if he had been less proud of her, he might have let her in. He could not refuse them his blessing—he had lost that in gambling to Gösta; but to open his door to her—that he would not do.

And the young girl still stood outside the door of her home. Now she shook the latch in a fit of fury; now she fell on her knees, and, clasping her frozen hands together, begged forgiveness.

But no one heard her, no one answered, no one opened.

Was it not awful? I am frightened in speaking of it. She came from a ball where she had been queen; she had been proud, rich, and happy, and in a moment she was cast down into bottomless misery. Shut out of her home, given a prey to the snow;

not scorned, nor beaten, nor cursed, only shut out with cold, determined heartlessness.

Think of the frosty, starry night surrounding her, the great wide night with its desolate fields of snow, and the silent forests. All slept, all was sunk in painless sleep, there was only one living point in all that slumbering whiteness. All sorrow and fear and horror, which at other times seems spread over all the world, were concentrated in that one lonely point. O God! to suffer alone in the midst of that slumbering, icy world.

For the first time in her life, Marienne knew hardness and cruelty. Her mother would not leave her bed to let her in; old servants, who had taught her to walk, heard her, but would not move a muscle to save her; and why was she thus punished? Where was her refuge, if not here? If she had been guilty of murder, she would have come here believing they would forgive her. If she had fallen to the greatest depth of misery, and come here in rags, she would have approached the door confidently, expecting a loving welcome. That door was the entrance to her home, and behind it she could only expect to find love.

Had her father not tried her sufficiently; would he never open? Would n't they open it soon?

"Father, father," she cried, "let me in. I am frozen and trembling. It is dreadful out here."

"Mother, mother, you have taken so many steps

to serve me, you have watched for me so many times, why do you sleep now? Mother, mother, awake this night also, and I will never cause you any more sorrow."

She called and then sank into breathless silence, to listen for an answer. No one heard her, no one answered.

She wrung her hands in agony, but no tears dimmed her eyes.

The long, dark house, with its closed doors and unlighted windows, lay mysterious, immovable in the night. What was to become of her without her home? She was dishonored, branded, as long as the heavens stand over the earth; and her own father had set the red iron on her shoulder.

"Father," she cried once more, "what will become of me? People will think the worst of me."

She wept in anguish, her body was rigid with cold.

Ah, that such trouble can envelop those who have stood so high. That it is so easy to be cast out into the deepest misery! Are we not then to fear life? Who of us sails securely? Round us surges sorrow like a foaming sea; see how its waves hungrily lick the sides of the vessel; see how they try to board her! Oh, there is no sure anchorage, no firm ground, no trusty ship, as far as the eye can reach, only an unknown heaven over the sea of trouble.



But silence! At last, at last! Light steps come through the entrance hall.

"Is it you, mother?" asked Marienne.

"Yes, my child."

"Can I come in now?"

"Your father won't let you in."

"I have walked in my thin shoes from Ekeby. I have stood here an hour and knocked and called. I am freezing to death. Why did you leave me?"

"My child, my child, why did you kiss Gösta Berling?"

"But tell my father that that does not mean that I love Gösta; it was in fun. Does he think I want to marry Gösta?"

"Go to the farm-bailiff's house, Marienne, and ask to remain there for the night. Your father is drunk, he won't hear reason. He locked me upstairs. I crept out when I thought he slept. He will kill me if I let you in."

"But, mother, shall I go to strangers when I have my own home? Are you as hard as my father? How can you allow him to shut me out? I will lie here in the snowdrifts, if you won't let me in."

Marienne's mother laid her hand on the latch, but at that moment heavy steps were heard on the staircase and a harsh voice called her.

Marienne listened—her mother hurried away; the harsh voice was scolding, and then . . . Marienne heard something awful—every sound in the silent house reached her ears. She heard the sound of a blow—of the stroke of a stick or a blow on the

head, then a faint cry, then another blow; he was beating her mother—the fearful, tyrannous Melchior Sinclaire was beating his wife.

Marienne threw herself writhing in agony on the steps. She was crying now, and her tears froze on the threshold of her home.

Pity—mercy! Open, open, that she may give her own shoulders to the blows. Oh, that he could beat her mother! beat her, because she could not see her daughter lie in the snowdrifts, because she had tried to comfort her!

Great degradation swept over her that night. She had dreamed herself a queen, and now she lay outside the door of her home, hardly better than a whipped tramp. But she raised herself again in icy anger. Once again she raised her hand and struck the door and cried:

"Hear what I say—you—you—you who struck my mother. You shall yet weep. Melchior Sinclaire, you shall weep!"

And then Marienne turned and lay down in the snowdrift. She threw aside her fur mantle, and lay down in the black velvet dress which stood out so distinctly against the white snow. She lay and thought of her father coming out early for his morning walk, and finding her there. Her only wish was that he himself should find her.

. . . .

Oh, Death, you pale friend, is it as true as it is com-

forting for me to know that I can never escape you? Even to me, the most diligent of the workers among men, you will come; loosen the worn shoes from my feet, snatch the duster and the milk-can out of my hand, and take my working clothes off my back. With gentle force you will stretch me upon a lace-embossed bed, you will wrap me in white linen, my feet will not require any shoes, but my hands will be covered with white gloves which no work will ever soil. Crowned for the joy of rest, I shall sleep for a thousand years. Oh, Saviour! The most diligent of workers am I, and I dream with a shiver of delight of the moment when I shall be taken to Thy kingdom.

Pale friend, my strength against yours is weakness, but I tell you that your fight was harder against the women of the olden days. The strength of life was greater in their slight bodies; no cold could cool their fiery blood.

You laid Marienne on your bed, oh, Death, and you sat by her side, as an old nurse watches by the cradle of a child till it sleeps. You true old nurse, who knows so well what is best for the children of men, how it must anger you when its playmates come, with laughter and shouts, and wake your sleeping child! How angry you must have been when the cavaliers lifted Marienne from her icy bed, when a man's arms clasped her to his breast, and when warm tears fell from his eyes on her face.

. . . .

At Ekeby all the lights were out and the guests departed. The cavaliers stood alone in the cavaliers' wing round the last half-emptied punch-bowl.

Then Gösta tapped on the rim of the bowl, and made a speech in honor of you — women of the olden days. To talk of you was to talk of heaven, he said. You were perfect beauty, perfect light. Ever youthful, ever beautiful, and mild as the eyes of a mother when she gazed at her child. As soft as a little squirrel you hung about man's neck, and no one ever heard your voice shake with anger; your forehead never frowned, your soft hands never grew hard and rough. You were saints in the temple of your homes. Men lay at your feet, offering incense and prayer to you. By your power, love worked its miracles, and round your head poetry set its glittering aureola.

And the cavaliers sprang up, wild with wine and the intoxication of his words — their blood leaping with joy. Even old Uncle Eberhard and lazy Cousin Kristoffer did not draw back from the new project. Quickly they harnessed the horses to the big sledge and the racing sledges, and off they went through the cold night to pay homage to those to whom homage was due — to serenade those whose bright eyes and rosy cheeks had graced the halls of Ekeby.

Oh, it must have pleased you greatly, ladies, to

be awakened from the heaven of your dreams by a serenade, sung by your most devoted admirers. It must have pleased you much as it pleases a departing soul to awake to the music of Paradise.

But the cavaliers had not gone very far on their way, for when they came to Björne, they found Marienne lying in the drift at the gate leading to the house. They trembled with fear and with fury when they saw her there. It was like finding a worshipped saint lying plundered and desecrated outside the church door; it was as if an unhung villain had broken the neck and torn out the strings of a Stradivarius.

Gösta shook his clenched fist at the dark house.

"You children of hate," he screamed. "You hailstones and north wind—you destroyers of God's pleasure garden!"

Beerencreutz lighted his horn lantern and threw its beams upon the blue-white face. And the cavaliers saw her torn hands, and the tears which had frozen in her eyelashes, and they sorrowed like women, for she was not only a saint to them but also a beautiful woman who had been a joy to their old hearts.

Gösta Berling threw himself on his knees beside her!

"Here she lies—my bride," he said. "She gave me the bridal kiss some hours ago—and her father promised me his blessing. She lies and waits for me

here in her snowy bed." And he lifted her in his strong arms.

"We will take her home to Ekeby," he cried. "She is mine now. I have found her in the snow-drift; no one can take her away from me. We will not wake them in that house. What has she to do inside the doors against which she had beaten her hands bloody?"

He was allowed to do as he wished. He laid Marienne in the first sledge and took his place beside her. Beerencreutz placed himself behind and took the reins.

"Take some snow and rub her, Gösta," he commanded.

The cold had but paralyzed her limbs—that was all. The excited heart still beat. She had not even lost consciousness; she knew the cavaliers had found her, but she could not move. So she lay stiff and motionless in the sledge, while Gösta sometimes rubbed her with snow, sometimes wept over her and kissed her, and she felt an unutterable longing to lift even one hand, so that she might return his caresses.

She remembered everything; lay there rigid and immovable and thought clearly as never before. Was she in love with Gösta Berling? Yes, she was! Was it only a caprice born of the night? No, it had been so for many years.

She compared herself with him and with the other

people in Värmland. They were all as unsophisticated children. They followed every fancy that drew them. They lived only a superficial life, and had never analyzed the depths of their souls. But she was different, as one does become by living in the world; she could never give herself wholly to anything. If she loved—yes, whatever it was she did—it seemed as if one-half of herself stood and looked on with a cold, scornful smile. She had longed for a passion that should sweep her away in unhesitating surrender. And now he had come, the mighty victor. When she kissed Gösta Berling on the balcony, she had forgotten herself for the first time.

And now it came over her again, and her heart beat so that she heard it. Would she never regain the mastery over her limbs? She felt a mad delight in being thrust out from her home. Now she would be Gösta's without doubting. How foolish she had been to force and bridle her love all these years. Oh, it was glorious to give way to it, to feel her blood rush madly along. But would she never, never be freed from those chains of ice? She had been icy hearted and yet fiery on the surface all her life; now she was changed, she had a fiery soul in a body of ice.

Then Gösta felt two arms slip round his neck in a weak, almost powerless caress. He could only just feel it, but Marienne meant to give expression to

all the repressed feeling within her by a passionate embrace.

When Beerencreutz saw this, he let the horse find its own path on the well-known road, while he gazed obstinately and continuously at the "Seven Sisters."

The Old Carriages

FRIENDS, if it should happen that you read this at night, as I write it, you must not draw a breath of relief and imagine that the good cavaliers were allowed to sleep undisturbed, after they arrived home with Marienne, and had arranged a comfortable bed for her in the best guest-chamber, opening out of the grand salon.

They went to bed, and they went to sleep; but theirs was not the good fortune to sleep in peace and quietness till midday, as it might have been ours, dear reader, if we had been up till four o'clock and our limbs ached wearily.

It must be remembered that during that time the Lady of Ekeby was wandering about the country with a beggar's scrip and staff, and that it never had been her way, when there was anything to be done, to wait for the convenience of tired wrong-doers. She was never less likely to do so than on that night, for she had determined to turn the cavaliers out of Ekeby.

The time was past and gone when she sat in splendor and might at Ekeby, and sowed joy over the earth as God sows the stars over the sky. And while she wandered homeless over the country, the honor and glory of the great estate lay in the hands of the cavaliers, to be guarded by them as the wind guards

the ash-heap and the spring sunshine cherishes the snowdrifts.

Sometimes it happened that the cavaliers drove out six or eight together in their long sledge, tandem, with sleigh-bells and flowing reins, and if they met the Major's wife they did not hang their heads. The noisy party stretched out clenched fists at her; a sudden turn of the sledge obliged her to plunge deep into the snowdrifts, and Major Fuchs, the great bear hunter, always thought it necessary to spit three times as a safeguard against the evil omen of such a meeting.

They had no pity for her. She was to them a witch, as she went about the roadways, and if misfortune had overtaken her, they would have cared no more than he who on Easter Eve fires off his gun and hits a witch flying past on her broomstick.

It had become a matter of conscience with them, poor cavaliers, to persecute the Major's wife. People so often have been cruel and have persecuted one another pitilessly in trying to save their own souls.

When, late at night, the cavaliers turned from the drinking-table to the window, to see if the night was calm and starlit, they often saw a dark shadow glide over the courtyard, and they knew that the Lady of Ekeby had come to look again at her dear house, and then the cavaliers' wing shook with the scornful shouts of the old sinners, and mocking words were thrown at her from the open window.

In truth, pride and selfishness were ruining the hearts of the poor adventurers. Sintram had instilled hate into them, and they could not have been in greater danger if the Major's wife had remained at Ekeby. More die in the flight than on the field of battle.

She did not cherish any great anger against the men. Had the power been hers, she would have punished them as you whip unruly boys, and then received them into favor again. But she feared for the well-being of her beloved home, left in the hands of the cavaliers, to be guarded as the wolf guards the sheepfold and the storks guard the spring seed.

There are many who have suffered in the same way. She was not alone in seeing ruin descend over the beloved home, and feeling despair when the cherished homestead fell to pieces. Many have seen the home of their childhood return their gaze like a wounded animal. Many have felt themselves guilty when they have seen the old trees dying away in the grasp of the lichens and the garden walks covered with grass. They could have fallen upon their knees before the fields, which formerly were covered with rich harvests, and begged them not to blame them for their shameful condition. And they turn away from the poor old horses; some one braver must meet their eyes. And they do not dare stand at the yard gate and see the cows returning from pasture.

No place on earth is so wretched to enter upon as a ruined home.

Oh, I beg you—you who guard the fields and meadows and parks and the happy flower-gardens—guard them well! With love and work! It is not well that Nature should sorrow over mankind.

And when I think how this proud Ekeby suffered under the cavaliers' management, I could wish that Fru Samzelius had gained her desire and turned them out of Ekeby. It was not her wish to undertake the management herself again. She had only one intention—to free her home from those mad creatures, those robbers, those locusts, after whose passage no good seed could grow.

While she wandered over the country and lived on alms, her thoughts were constantly with her mother, and the feeling that no improvement of her lot was possible until her mother's curse was lifted gained firm hold in her mind.

No one had ever spoken of her death, so she was probably still alive at the forge in the Älfdal forests. Though ninety years old, she lived a life of unceasing toil, watching over her dairy in summer and the charcoal-burning in winter, constantly working and longing for the end of her life's mission.

And the Major's wife felt that her mother had been living all those years to be enabled at length to lift the curse from her shoulders. The mother could

not find it in her heart to die, who had called down such trouble on her child.

And the Major's wife longed to go to her, so that they both might secure peace. She would wander through the dark forests, beside the shores of the long river, till she reached the house of her youth. She could have no rest till she had done that. There were many who offered her a warm home and all the gifts of faithful friendship in those days, but she would not stay. Surly and angry, she went from one estate to another, for she was oppressed by the curse.

She would go to her mother, but she must put her house in order. She was not going to leave it in the hands of such careless spendthrifts, drinkers, and wasteful destroyers of God's good gifts.

Was she to go away and find her inheritance dissipated on her return, her foundries standing silent, her horses worn out, and her servants scattered abroad? Oh, no; once more she would rise in strength, and turn out the cavaliers from Ekeby.

She understood very well how happy her husband felt in seeing the estates being ruined. But she knew him well enough to be sure that if she once could drive away these locusts, he would be too indifferent to find new ones. If the cavaliers were sent away, her old bailiff would manage Ekeby on the old lines.

And thus her shadow had often been seen on the dark roads about the foundries. She had crept in and out of the crofters' huts, and had whispered

with the millers and the carters in the lower story of the water-mill, and had consulted with the blacksmiths in the dark forges.

They had all sworn to help her. The honor and glory of the old estate should not be left any longer in the hands of the careless cavaliers, to be guarded by them as the wind cherishes the ashes and the wolf the sheepfold.

And on the night when the gay gentlemen had danced and laughed and drunk, till, dead tired, they had thrown themselves on their beds, on that night they were to be turned out of Ekeby.

She let them enjoy themselves. She sat in the forge and waited for the conclusion of the ball. She had waited even longer, till the cavaliers returned from their expedition, waiting in silent expectation till it was told her that the last light had been extinguished in the cavaliers' wing and that the great house slept. Then she arose and went out. It was already five o'clock in the morning, but the dark starlit February night still hung over the earth.

The Major's wife commanded that all the people should assemble round the cavaliers' wing; she went herself to the chief entrance, knocked, and was admitted. The young daughter of the Broby parson, whom she had brought up to be a trusty servant, met her.

"My lady is heartily welcome," she said, and kissed her hand.

"Put out that light," commanded the Major's wife. "Do you think I cannot find my way here without a light?"

And she began a silent tour of inspection through the quiet house. She went from cellar to garret, and said good-by to it all. With stealthy footsteps they moved from room to room.

The Major's wife held communion with her memories; the servant neither sighed nor sobbed, but tear after tear fell unheeded from her eyes as she followed her mistress. The silver cupboard and the linen presses were opened, and the Lady of Ekeby passed her hand lovingly over the fine white damask cloths and the splendid silver tankards, and over the huge pile of feather bolsters in the maid's store-room. She must touch and handle everything, all the looms and spinning-wheels, and she probed the contents of the spice cupboard, and felt the lines of tallow candles which hung from a pole in the kitchen ceiling. "They are quite dry," she said; "they could be taken down and laid away."

She went down to the wine-cellar, tilted up the wine-casks gently, and ran her fingers over the rows of bottles. She was in the buttery and kitchen. She examined it all, and put out her hand in farewell to all in her house.

Lastly she entered the living-rooms. In the dining-room she placed her hand on the wide flaps of the big table.

"There are many who have eaten plentifully at this board," she said. And thus she went through all the rooms. She found the long wide sofas in their places, and she felt the cold surface of the marble tables borne up by the gilded griffins which supported the long mirrors with their trio of dancing goddesses.

"This is a rich house," she said. "He was a splendid man who gave me all this to rule over."

In the salon, where the dancing had lately been so gay, the stiff-backed chairs were ranged in order round the walls. There she went to the piano and gently struck a note. "Even in my time there was no lack of gaiety and laughter here," she said.

She also entered the best guest-chamber opening from the salon. It was quite dark in there, and in feeling her way she touched the face of her companion.

"Are you crying?" she asked, as she felt her fingers wet with tears.

The young girl burst into sobs.

"My lady," she cried, "my lady, they will ruin everything. Why do you leave us and let the cavaliers ruin your house?"

Then the Major's wife drew up the blind and pointed out into the yard.

"Have I ever taught you to weep and moan?" she cried. "Look out, the yard is full of men; to-morrow there won't be a cavalier left in Ekeby."

"And my lady is returning to us?" asked the girl.

"My time has not come yet," answered the Major's wife. "The roadway must still be my home and the strawstack my bed, but you shall guard Ekeby for me till I come."

And they went on. Neither of them knew that Marienne was sleeping in that room. But she was not asleep. She was wide awake, had heard and understood all. She had been lying on her bed, lost in a reverie of love.

"Thou Mighty One," she said, "who hast lifted me above myself! I lay in the deepest misery, and thou hast turned it to Paradise. My hands were wounded on the iron latch of the barred door, and my tears lay frozen on the threshold of my home. Hate froze my heart when I heard the blows my mother received, and I tried to sleep away my anger in the snowdrift, but Thou hast come to me. Oh, Love, thou child of fire, thou hast come to one who has been frozen to the heart. If I compare my misery with the blessedness I have from it, the misery is nothing. I am freed from all ties; I have no father, no mother, no home. Men will turn from me and believe ill of me. Well, it is thy will, oh, Love, for why should I stand higher than my beloved? Hand in hand we will go forth into the world. Gösta Berling's bride is a poor girl. He found me in the snow-drifts. So let us make our home together, not in wide

halls, but in a cotter's hut in the forest clearing. I shall help him to watch the charcoal-stacks. I shall help him to set traps for haresand partridges. I shall cook his food and mend his clothes. Oh, my beloved —shall I feel lonely and sad when I sit there watching for you? I shall—I shall, but not for the days of riches. Only for thee, only for thee shall I long, and hope for thy footsteps on the forest path, for thy glad song as thou comest home with thine axe over thy shoulder. Oh, my beloved, my beloved, as long as I live will I wait for thee!"

Thus lying and composing a hymn to the all-conquering God of Love, she had not closed her eyes when the Major's wife came in.

When they had left the room, Marienne rose and dressed herself again. Once more she put on the black velvet dress and the thin dancing-shoes. She wrapped the bedcover round her as a shawl, and hurried out once more in the awful night.

Quiet, starlit, and bitterly cold, the February night still rested upon the earth. It seemed as though it would never end, and the darkness and cold which it spread abroad that night lasted long, long after the sun rose again, long after the drifts which Marienne trampled through had melted into air.

Marienne hurried away for help. She could not allow the men who had rescued her, had opened their hearts and home to her, to be hunted out of Ekeby. She would go to Sjö, to Major Samzelius.

She must hurry, it would take her an hour to get back.

When the Lady of Ekeby had said farewell to her home, she went down to the courtyard, and the strife round the cavaliers' wing began.

She placed the people round the tall, narrow building, the second story of which was famous as being the home of the cavaliers. In the biggest room there, with its plaster walls and the large chests painted red and the enormous folding-table where the cards were swimming about in the spilt wine, on the wide beds, hidden behind the yellow-striped curtains, slept the cavaliers.

And in the stables before their full mangers slept the cavaliers' horses, and dreamed of their youthful exploits. How happy in those restful days to dream of the wild feats of their youth! of their journeys to the horse-market, where they stood day and night under the open sky; of sharp canters from early service on Christmas morning; of trial races before exchanging owners, when drunken men, amid a rain of cutting blows, leaned far out of their vehicles, and swore fiercely in their ears. Happy so to dream, when they know they will never leave the full mangers and the warm stalls of Ekeby!

In the old coach-house, where the broken chaises and discarded sledges are placed, there is a wonderful assemblage of old vehicles. There are small hand-sledges and ice-hilling sledges painted in green and

red and gold. There stands the first cariole seen in Värmland, brought there by Beerencreutz as spoil from the war of 1814. There are every conceivable kind of shay and chaise with swaying springs—post-chaises, extraordinary vehicles of torturing construction, with their seats resting on wooden springs. They are all there, all the murderous types of equipages which have been sung about in the times of road travelling. And there also stands the long sledge which holds all the twelve cavaliers, and poor, frozen, old Cousin Kristoffer's covered sledge, and Örneclou's family sledge with the moth-eaten bear-skin cover and the worn crest on the splash-board, and the racing sledges—innumerable racing sledges.

Many are the cavaliers who lived and died at Ekeby. Their names are forgotten, and they have no place any longer in people's hearts; but the Major's wife has gathered together all the old carriages in which they arrived at Ekeby, and preserved them in the old coach-house.

They also sleep and dream, and let the dust gather thickly over them. They never dream to leave Ekeby again—never again. So the leather bursts in the footbags, and the wheels fall to pieces, and the wood-work rots—the old carriages don't want to live any longer, they want to die.

But on that February night the Lady of Ekeby ordered the coach-house to be opened, and, by the

light of torches and lanterns, she ordered the carriages belonging to the present set of Ekeby cavaliers to be brought out — Beerencreutz's old cariole and Örneclou's crested vehicle and the covered sledge which protected Cousin Kristoffer. She cared not whether the vehicle was intended for winter or summer use; she was only careful each should get his own.

And the old horses, which have been dreaming before their full mangers, they are also awakened.

Dreams shall for once come true.

Again you shall make trial of the steep hillside, and the mouldy hay in the shed of the village inn, and the cut of the drunken horse-seller's whip, and the mad racing over the slippery ice which you tremble to stand upon.

When the tiny grey Norwegian horses were harnessed to a tall, spindle-like chaise, and the big, bony, riding-horses to the low racing sledges, they were quite in keeping. The old animals snorted when the bits were forced into their toothless mouths, the old vehicles groaned and creaked. Brittle infirmity, which ought to rest in quiet till the end of the world, was brought out to the sight of all; stiff muscles, lame forefeet, spavin, and strangles were shown in the light of day.

The stablemen did manage at last to harness the horses to the old vehicles, and then asked their mistress in which vehicle Gösta Berling should be

placed, for, as you know, Gösta Berling was brought to Ekeby in Fru Samzelius' own sledge.

"Harness Don Juan to our best racing sledge," she commanded, "and spread the bear-skin cover with the silver claws over it." And when the groom objected—"There is n't a horse in my stable I would n't give to be freed from that man. Do you understand?"

So the horses and carriages are ready, but the cavaliers are still asleep.

Now it is their turn to be brought out into the wintry night, but it is a more daring exploit to take them in their beds than to bring out the stiff old horses and the rattling old carriages. They are daring, strong, fearful men, hardened by a hundred adventures. They will resist to the death, and it will be no easy task to take them in their beds, and bring them down to the vehicles which are to convey them away.

The Major's wife commanded that a stack of straw standing near should be set on fire, so that the light might shine into the cavaliers' room.

"The straw is mine—all Ekeby is mine," she said.

And when the strawstack was in flames, she cried, "Wake them now." But the cavaliers slept on behind firmly closed doors. The crowd raised that fearful, frightful cry, "Fire! Fire!"—but the cavaliers slept.

The heavy hammers of the master blacksmith

struck against the outer door in vain; a hard snowball broke a window-pane and flew into the room, striking the curtains of a bed—but the cavaliers slept soundly.

They dream a lovely girl throws her handkerchief to them, they dream of the applause before the curtain of the theatre, they dream of gay laughter and the deafening noise of the midnight carouse. It would require a cannon shot at their ear, a sea of icy water, to awaken them.

They have sung and danced and played and acted; they are heavy with wine, their strength is gone; they sleep a sleep as deep as death.

That blessed sleep nearly saved them.

The people began to believe the silence hid some menace. It might be that the cavaliers were away seeking help. It might mean that they were standing on guard, with their fingers on the triggers of their guns, behind the doors and the windows, ready to shoot down the first man who entered.

The cavaliers were cunning and warlike men; there must be some meaning in the strange silence. Who could believe it of them that they would allow themselves to be surprised like a bear in a hole.

The crowd shouted "Fire! Fire!" time after time, without any result. Then, when they were all trembling, the Major's wife took an axe, and broke open the outer door.

Then, alone, she sprang upstairs, tore open the

door of the cavaliers' wing, and screamed again, "Fire! Fire!"

That voice echoed more clearly in the minds of the cavaliers than all the shouting of the crowd. Accustomed to obey its commands, twelve men sprang up out of their beds, saw the glare on the windows, snatched up their clothes, and sprang down the stairs into the yard.

But there, in the doorway, stood the master smith and two big carters, and great disgrace overtook the cavaliers. As one by one they came down, they were caught, thrown to the ground, their feet were tied, and they were borne away to the carriage which was destined for them.

Not one escaped—they were all caught. Beerencreutz, the fierce colonel, was tied and carried away as well as Kristian Bergh, the strong captain, and Uncle Eberhard, the philosopher.

Even the unconquerable, greatly feared Gösta Berling was overpowered. The Major's wife had succeeded; she was, after all, stronger than the cavaliers.

It was pitiful to see them as they sat bound on the vehicles. Hanging heads and fierce glances were to be seen—the courtyard echoed with oaths and wild bursts of impotent rage.

The Lady of Ekeby went from one to another.

"You are to swear," she said, "never to return to Ekeby."

"Begone, you witch!"

"You shall swear," she repeated, "or I will throw you, bound as you are, into the cavaliers' wing, and you shall die there to-night, for I will burn down the cavaliers' wing as sure as I live."

"You dare not."

"Dare not? Is n't Ekeby mine? Oh, you scoundrels! Don't you think I remember how you spat after me on the roadside? I should like to set fire to the building even now, and let you all burn. Did you lift a hand to help me when I was turned out of my home? No, swear now!"

And she looked furious, though perhaps she pretended to be more angry than she really was, and so many men with axes stood around her, the cavaliers were obliged to swear.

Then she ordered their clothes and boxes to be brought out and their hands to be untied, and the reins were placed between their fingers.

But time had passed, and Marienne had reached Sjö before this.

The Major was no late sleeper, he was up and dressed when she came. She met him in the yard; he had been to give his bears their breakfast.

He did not say much to her news, only went back to his bears, tied a nose-rope to each, led them out, and hurried away in the direction of Ekeby.

Marienne followed him at a distance. She was ready to fall, she was so tired, but she saw a bright

flare of fire in the sky, and that nearly frightened her to death.

What a night that had been! A man had beaten his wife, and left his daughter to freeze to death outside his doors. Did a woman intend now to burn her enemies to death? Did the old Major intend to set his bears upon his own people?

She conquered her weakness, passed the Major, and ran wildly to Ekeby.

She was well ahead of him. She gained the courtyard and pushed her way among the crowd. When she gained the centre and stood face to face with the Major's wife, she cried as loudly as she could, "The Major! The Major is coming with his bears!"

There was great alarm among the people; all eyes turned to the Major's wife.

"You went for him," she said to Marienne.

"Fly," cried Marienne, still more eagerly. "Fly, for God's sake! I don't know what the Major will do, but he has the bears with him."

All stood with their eyes fastened upon the Major's wife.

"I thank you for your assistance, my children," she said, calmly, to the people. "All has been so arranged that you cannot be taken to task for this night's doings, nor will they harm you in any way. Go home now! I don't wish to see any of my people kill or be killed. Go now!"

The people stood motionless.

The Major's wife turned to Marienne.

"I know you love," she said; "you have acted in the madness of love. May the day never come when you are powerless to prevent the ruin of your home! May you ever be mistress of your own tongue and your own hand when anger fills your soul!"

"My children, follow me," she said, turning to the people. "May God guard Ekeby, I go to my mother. Oh, Marienne! when you have regained your senses, when Ekeby is destroyed, and all the country groans in famine, think then of your doings this night, and take pity on the people!"

And she left the courtyard, followed by all the crowd.

When the Major arrived he found not a living soul besides Marienne and a long row of horses harnessed to old vehicles—a long, wretched line of them, where the horses were not worse than the carriages, nor the carriages worse than their owners. They had all fared hardly in life.

Marienne went forward and unbound the cavaliers. She saw how they bit their lips and would not meet her eyes. They were ashamed as never before. They had never been so degraded in their lives.

"I was not better off when I lay on my knees on the steps at Björne a few hours ago," said Marienne.

And so, dear reader, I will not try to describe

the further events of that night—how the old carriages went back to the coach-house, and the old horses to their stalls, and the cavaliers to the cavaliers' wing. The dawn began to spread itself over the eastern hills, and the day came bringing quietness and calm. How much quieter are the bright, sunny days than the dark nights, under whose sheltering wing the wild beasts hunt and the owls hoot!

Only this I must add: when the cavaliers came upstairs again, and they found a few drops in the punch-bowl still to pour into their glasses, a sudden enthusiasm swept over them.

"Skål, for the Major's wife!" they cried.

Oh, she was a mighty woman! What better could they desire than to serve and adore her!

Was it not awful that the devil had such power over her, and all she lived for was to send cavaliers' souls to hell?

The Great Bear of Gurlita Cliff

IN the forest live evil beasts, whose jaws are armed with dreadful gleaming teeth or sharp beaks, whose feet have sharp claws that long to fasten upon a living throat, and whose eyes glimmer with the lust of murder.

There live the wolves, which come out at night, and give chase to the peasant's sledge, till the mother must take the child sitting on her knee and throw it out to save her own life and her husband's.

There lives the lynx, which the people call the "big cat," for it is dangerous to speak of it by its right name, in the forest at least. He who has talked of it during the daytime had better see to the doors and air-holes of his sheepfold at night, or it will find its way thither. It climbs up the wall, for its claws are as sharp as steel tacks, glides through the narrow opening, and throws itself upon the sheep. And it clings upon their necks, and drinks the blood out of the jugular vein, and kills and destroys till every sheep is dead. It does not stay its wild death-dance among the terrified animals while any of them show a sign of life.

And in the morning the peasant finds all his sheep dead with mangled throats, for the big cat leaves nothing living where it ravages.

In the forest, too, lives the great owl, which hoots

at twilight. If you anger him, then he swoops down upon you, and tears out your eyes, for he is not a real bird, but an evil spirit.

And there, too, lives the most terrible of all the forest beasts—the bear, which has the strength of twelve men, and, when once he has become blood-thirsty, can only be killed by a silver bullet.

Can anything give a beast a nimbus of greater terror than this, that he can only be killed by a silver bullet? What are the secret, awful powers that dwell within him, and make him impervious to ordinary lead! A child will lie awake many long hours, shuddering in fear of the wicked beast which the evil powers protect.

If you should meet him in the forest, tall as a moving mountain, you must not run away nor try to defend yourself; you must throw yourself down on the earth and pretend to be dead. Many little children have lain in fancy on the ground with a bear bending over them. He has turned them over with his paw, and they have felt his hot, panting breath on their faces, but they lay motionless till he went away to dig a hole to bury them in. Then they rose gently and crept away, first slowly, then in wildest flight. But think! Think if the bear had not found them to be really dead, but had given them a bite to make sure, or if he had been hungry and had eaten them at once, or if he had seen them when they crept away and had pursued them! Oh, God!

Terror is a witch who sits in the twilight of the forests, and composes magic songs for the ears of men, and fills their hearts with awful thoughts. Of these are born Fear, which burdens life and veils the beauty of the smiling landscape. Malicious is Nature, and treacherous as a sleeping serpent, and never to be trusted. There lies the Löfven Lake in splendid beauty, but trust it not, it lies in wait for its prey; every year it must receive its tribute of the drowned. There lies the forest, enchantingly peaceful, but trust it not! The forest is full of wicked beasts, possessed by the spirits of the witches and the souls of murderous villains.

Trust not the brook with its sweet waters! It has sickness and death for you, if you wade there after sunset. Trust not the cuckoo, which calls so joyfully in spring. In autumn it changes into a hawk with cruel eyes and awful claws! Trust not the moss nor the heather nor the ledge of rock: all Nature is evil, possessed by invisible spirits which hate mankind. There is no place where you can set your foot securely, and it is marvellous that feeble humanity can withstand so much persecution.

A witch is Terror. Does she still sit in the darkness of the Värmland forests and sing her magic songs? Does she still darken the beauty of the smiling landscape and crush the joy of life? Great has her power been, I know well, for I too have had steel put into my cradle and a piece of charcoal into my

bath; I know it well, for I have felt her iron grip upon my heart.

But you must not imagine I am going to tell you anything dreadful. It is only an old story about the great bear of Gurlita Cliff, and you are at liberty to believe it or not, as ought to be the case with all true stories of sport.

. . . .

The great bear had his home on the fine mountain peak called Gurlita Cliff, which rose, precipitous and difficult of ascent, from the shore of the Upper Löfven.

The root of an overturned pine, about which the tufts of moss still hung, formed the roof and walls of his house. Pines and fir trees protected it, and snow covered it closely. He could lie there and sleep a calm, sweet sleep from one summer to another.

Was he then a poet, a gentle dreamer, this shaggy forest king, this cross-eyed robber? Did he wish to sleep away the bleak night of the cold winter and its colorless days, to be awakened by purling streams and the songs of birds? Did he lie there and dream of the reddening whortleberry banks, and of the ant-hills full of brown, spicy little insects, and of the white lambs that fed on the green slopes? Would he, happy creature, escape life's winter?

The drifting snow whirled, whistling, among the pine trees; the wolves and foxes were abroad, mad-

dened by hunger. Why should the bear alone slumber? May he arise and feel how sharply the frost nips, and how heavy it is to walk in the deep snow!

He has bedded himself in so well, he is like the sleeping princess in the fairy tale. As she was awakened to life by love, so he will be awakened by the spring, by a sunbeam which finds its way between the branches and warms his nose, by some drops of water from the melting snowdrift which penetrates his fur coat. Woe to him who disturbs him before that time!

If only any one had inquired how the forest king wished to be awakened! If a shower of hail had not whisked suddenly between the branches and found its way into his skin like a horde of angry mosquitoes!

He heard sudden shouts and a great noise and shots. He flung the sleep from his limbs, and tore aside the branches to see what was the matter. There was work for the old fighting champion. It was not spring shouting and roaring outside his lair, nor could it be the wind, which sometimes threw the pine trees over and whirled the snow about, but it was the cavaliers — the cavaliers from Ekeby.

They were old acquaintances. He well remembered the night when Beerencreutz and Fuchs sat in ambush in a Nygård cowshed, where a visit was expected from him. They had just fallen asleep over their gin flasks, but woke up to find he was carry-

ing away the cow he had killed out of the stall, and fell upon him with guns and knives. They recaptured the cow, and destroyed one of his eyes, but he managed to escape alive.

Yes, old acquaintances were they! The forest king remembered how they came upon him on another occasion, just as he and his royal consort and their children were lying down for their winter's sleep in their old castle on Gurlita Cliff. He had escaped, sweeping aside all that came in his path, and fleeing without heeding the bullets, but he was lamed for life by a shot in the thigh, and when he returned at night to his castle, he found the snow dyed red with the blood of his royal mate, and the royal children had been carried away to the dwellings of men, there to grow up as their servants and friends.

The ground trembled, and the snowdrift covering the bear-hole shook, as the great bear, the cavaliers' old enemy, broke out of his lair. Take care, Fuchs, old bear hunter; take care, Beerencreutz, colonel and camphio player; take care, Gösta Berling, hero of a thousand adventures!

Woe to all poets, all dreamers, all lovers! There stood Gösta Berling, his finger on the trigger of his gun, as the bear went straight toward him. Why did he not shoot? What was he thinking of?

Why did he not send a bullet into the broad chest. He was standing in the right place to do it, and the others had not the chance of a shot at the

right moment. Did he think he was on parade before the forest king?

Of course Gösta stood dreaming of beautiful Marienne, who was lying ill at Ekeby, having taken cold on the night when she lay in the snowdrift. He thought of her, who also was a sacrifice to the curse of hate that lies over the world, and he shuddered at himself at having gone forth to persecute and kill.

And there came the great bear straight to him, blind in one eye from the blow of a cavalier's knife, lame from a cavalier's bullet, angry and unkempt and lonely since they had killed his wife and carried off his children. And Gösta saw him as he was, a poor persecuted beast, whose life he did not care to take, for it was the only thing the poor creature possessed, when men had taken all else from him.

"He may kill me," thought Gösta, "but I won't shoot."

And while the bear rushed toward him, he stood as quietly as if on parade, and when the forest king came right in front of him, he shouldered his gun and took a step aside.

Then the bear pursued his way, knowing full well there was no time to lose. He plunged into the forest, forced a way through drifts as high as a man, rolled down the steep slopes, and fled irreclaimably, while all the cavaliers who had stood with their guns

at full cock, waiting for Gösta's shot, now discharged them after him.

But in vain. The ring was broken and the bear was gone. Fuchs scolded, Beerencreutz swore, but Gösta only laughed. How could they expect a man as happy as he was to kill any of God's children?

The great bear of Gurlita Cliff escaped with his life from the fray, but he had been thoroughly awakened from his winter sleep, as the peasants soon had cause to know. There was no bear who could tear open the low, cellar-like roofs of their sheep-folds so easily; none could so cunningly avoid a carefully arranged ambush.

The people on the Upper Löfven were soon in despair what to do about it. They sent again and again to the cavaliers, begging them to come and shoot him.

And day after day and night after night, during all the month of February, the cavaliers made their way to the Upper Löfven in search of the bear, but he always escaped them. Had he learned cunning from the fox and sharpness from the wolves? While they were guarding one farmyard, he was laying the neighboring yard waste; while they searched for him in the forest, he was giving chase to a peasant driving over the ice. He had become the most audacious of marauders; he crept into the garret and emptied the goodwife's honey-pot, and killed the horse standing harnessed to her husband's sledge.

But by and by people began to understand what kind of a bear he was, and the reason why Gösta Berling had not shot at him. Dreadful as it was to think of, this was no ordinary bear! No one need think of killing him unless he carried a silver bullet in his gun. A bullet of mingled silver and bell metal, cast on a Thursday night at new moon in a church tower, without the priest or sexton or any living mortal knowing about it, would certainly bring him down, but such a bullet was not easy to procure.

. . . .

There was one man at Ekeby, more than the others, who was mortified at this state of things. It was, of course, Anders Fuchs, the bear hunter. He lost both appetite and sleep in his anger at not being able to kill the big bear of Gurlita Cliff, till at last he also began to understand that the bear could only be felled by a silver bullet.

Major Anders Fuchs was not a handsome man. He had a clumsy, heavy body and a broad, red face with hanging pouches under his cheeks and a many-doubled chin. His small black moustache stood as stiff as a brush above his full lips, and his black hair was close and thick, and rose straight up on his head. Besides this, he was a man of few words and a great eater. He was not a man whom women met with sunny smiles or open arms, and he did not waste any tender glances on them either.

No one thought he would ever see a woman to whom he would give preference, and anything in connection with love or sentiment was utterly foreign to his nature.

So when he went about longing for moonlight, you must not imagine he wished to make the good lady, Luna, a confidant in any tender love trouble; he was only thinking of the silver bullet which must be moulded by the light of the new moon.

On a Thursday evening, when the moon was only two fingers' width and hung over the horizon for a couple of hours after sunset, Major Fuchs betook himself from Ekeby without telling any one where he was going. He had a fire-steel and a bullet form in his game-bag and his gun on his back, and he went toward Bro Church to see what Fortune had in store for an honest man.

The church lay on the eastern shore of the narrow strait between the Upper and the Lower Löfven, and Major Fuchs was obliged to cross Sund Bridge to reach it. He marched down thither in deep thought without looking up at the Bro Hills, where the houses were sharply outlined against the clear evening sky, or toward Gurlita Cliff raising its round head in the evening glow. He stared only at the ground, and wondered how he was to get hold of the church key without any one discovering the theft.

When he reached the bridge, he heard some one

screaming so wildly that he was obliged to raise his head.

A little German, Faber by name, was organist at Bro at that time. He was a slender man, wanting in both dignity and weight; and the sexton was Jans Larsson, a doughty peasant, but poor, for the Broby parson had cheated him out of his patrimony, five hundred dalers. The sexton wanted to marry the organist's sister, the little, refined Fröken Faber, but the organist would not hear of it, and thus the two were enemies. That evening the sexton had met the organist on the bridge and straightway fallen upon him. He caught him by the chest, lifted him over the parapet of the bridge, and told him he would drop him into the strait if he would not promise him the hand of the little lady. Still the German would not consent; he kicked and screamed and still persisted in his "No," though he saw beneath him the stream of black, open water rushing between its white banks.

"No, no!" he screamed, "no, no!"

And it is very possible that the sexton, in his fury, would have allowed his captive to drop down into the cold, black water, if Major Fuchs had not come upon the bridge just then. He was startled, placed Faber on his feet again, and disappeared as rapidly as possible.

Little Faber fell upon the Major's neck and thanked him for saving his life, but Major Fuchs

thrust him aside and said it was nothing to be thankful for. The Major had no love for the Germans since he lay quartered in Putbus on the Rügen during the Pomeranian war. He had never been so near starving to death as during that time.

Then little Faber was for running to Justice Schärling and charging the sexton with attempting to murder him, but the Major soon convinced him that it was not worth while to do so; for in that country it cost nothing at all to kill a German, not a penny, and to prove the truth of his words, he offered to throw him into the strait himself.

Then Faber calmed himself, and invited the Major to go home with him and eat some sausages and drink warm German beer.

The Major accepted, for he thought the organist was sure to have a church key, and they went up the hill on which Bro Church stood, with its rectory and the sexton's and organist's dwellings around it.

"Please excuse things," said little Faber, when he and the Major entered the room. "We are not in very good order to-day, we have been so busy, my sister and I. We have killed a cock."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed the Major.

Directly afterwards little Fröken Faber came into the room carrying great earthenware jugs full of beer. Now every one knows that the Major did not look upon women with the kindest of glances, but he was obliged to look graciously on the little lady

who was so neat in her pretty cap and laces. The fair hair was brushed so smoothly on her forehead, and the homespun dress was so neat and so beautifully clean, her little hands were so busy and eager, and her little face so rosy and round, that he found himself thinking that if he had seen that bit of womankind twenty-five years ago, he would certainly have felt forced to pay court to her.

But though she was so rosy and helpful and so neat, her eyes were quite red with crying. It was just that which gave him such tender thoughts regarding her.

While the men ate and drank, she passed in and out of the room. Once she came to her brother, curtsied, and asked, "Will my brother say how the cows are to be placed in the shed?"

"Place twelve on the left and eleven on the right; they will not be crowded then," replied little Faber.

"It is extraordinary how many cows you have, Faber!" exclaimed the Major.

But the truth of the matter was that the organist had only two cows, but he called one Twelve and the other Eleven, so that it should sound grand when he talked of them.

The Major learned that the cowhouse was being rebuilt, so that the cows were out of doors during the day, and were placed at night in the woodshed.

And going in and out of the room, the little Fröken came to her brother again, curtsied, and

said, "The carpenter was asking how high the cow-house was to be built."

"Measure by the cows," replied the organist. "Measure by the cows."

Major Fuchs thought that a very good answer.

And without further ado the Major found himself asking the organist why his sister's eyes were so red, and he learned that she was crying because her brother would not allow her to marry the sexton, who was a poor man and encumbered with debt.

That made the Major sink still deeper in thought. He emptied one jugful after another and ate one sausage after another without noticing what he was doing. Little Faber shuddered at such an appetite and such thirst, but the more the Major drank and ate, the clearer grew his mind, and the more determined he became to do something for the little Fröken.

He was Major Fuchs, the bear hunter, the man who ate up in one evening a piece of brawn which the Judge's wife at Munkerud had intended to last all through the Christmas holidays, and he was pleased and in gentle mood at the thought of what splendid sausage he was eating. Yes, he would certainly see to it that Fröken Faber's eyes need weep no more.

Meanwhile he kept his eye on the big key with the curved handle hanging near the door, and no sooner had little Faber, who had been obliged to

keep the Major company at the beer-jugs, laid his head on the table and was snoring, than the Major clutched the key, put on his cap, and hurried away.

A few minutes later he was feeling his way up the steeple stairs, lighted by his tiny horn lantern, and reached at last the bell tower, where the bells opened their wide throats above him. Once there, he scraped some bell metal off one of them with a file, and he was just on the point of taking the bullet form and a small pan out of his game-bag when he discovered that he was without the most important thing of all—he had brought no silver with him. If there was to be any power in that bullet, it must be cast in that belfry. Now all was complete: it was Thursday night and there was a new moon, and no one knew of his being there, and yet he could not cast his bullet. There in the silence of the night he sent up such a mighty oath, it fairly rang in the bells above him.

Just then he heard a slight noise in the church below, and thought he heard steps on the stairs. Yes, so it was, heavy steps were ascending the stairs.

Major Fuchs, standing there swearing so that the bells trembled, became a trifle thoughtful at this turn of affairs. He wondered who it could be coming to help him cast his bullet. The footsteps approached nearer and nearer. He who climbed the stairs was certainly bound for the belfry.

The Major crept in among the beams and raft-

ers, and put out his lantern. He was not frightened exactly, but everything depended on his doing his work unseen. And no sooner was he concealed, than the new-comer's head rose to the level of the floor.

The Major recognized him—it was the miserly Broby parson. He, nearly crazy with covetousness, was in the habit of hiding his treasure in the most extraordinary places. Now he came to the belfry with a packet of notes which he wished to conceal there. He did not know that any one saw him; he lifted a board in the floor, placed the money under it, and departed again.

The Major was not backward, he lifted the same board. What heaps of money—rolls and rolls of notes, and among them, leather pouches full of silver! The Major took just as much silver as he needed for his bullet, and did not disturb the rest.

When he descended from the belfry, the silver bullet was in his gun. He marched away wondering what more fortune had in store for him that night. There is something extraordinary about Thursday nights, as everybody knows. He took a turn in the direction of the organist's house. Think, if that wretch of a bear knew that Faber's cows stood in a miserable shed, hardly better than being under the open sky!

Well, was that not something big and black he saw making its way over the field toward the cow-shed? It must be the bear.

He laid his gun to his cheek and was quite prepared to fire, when he suddenly changed his mind.

Fröken Faber's red eyes appeared before him in the darkness. He thought he would like to help her and the sexton, but, of course, it was a great sacrifice for him to give up the chance of killing the great bear of Gurlita Cliff. He said afterwards that nothing in his life had been so hard to do as that, but as the little Fröken was so particularly nice and sweet, he did it.

He went to the sexton's house, woke him, dragged him out half-naked, and told him that he must shoot the bear which was creeping round Faber's woodshed.

"If you shoot that bear, he will certainly give you his sister," he said, "for you will at once become an honored man. That is no ordinary bear, and the best man in the country would think it an honor to kill him."

And he placed his own gun in his hand, loaded with the bullet made of silver and bell metal, cast in a belfry on a Thursday night at new moon, and he could not help trembling with envy that another than he was to shoot the great forest king, the old bear of Gurlita Cliff.

The sexton aimed—aimed, God help us, as if he meant to shoot the Great Bear or Charles' Wain, which, high in heaven, circles round the Polar Star, and not a bear walking on the earth—and the gun

went off with a report which was heard even on Gurlita Cliff.

But whatever he aimed at, the bear fell. That is always the case when you shoot with a silver bullet. You hit the bear in the heart even if you aim at Charles' Wain.

The people rushed out at once from all the cottages near, wondering what had happened, for never did a shot sound louder or awake so many sleeping echoes as that did, and the sexton was greatly praised, for the bear was a real trouble to all the country-side.

Little Faber also came out, but Major Fuchs was cruelly deceived. There stood the sexton, highly honored by his neighbors, and he had saved Faber's own cows, yet the little organist was neither touched nor thankful. He did not open his arms to the sexton as to a brother-in-law and a hero.

The Major wrinkled his brows and stamped his foot in anger at such narrow-mindedness. He wanted to explain to the avaricious, mean little man what a feat had been done, but he began to stammer so, he could not get a word out. And he grew more and more angry at the thought of having uselessly sacrificed the great honor of killing the bear.

Oh! it was simply impossible for him to conceive how the man who had accomplished such a feat was not accounted worthy of winning the proudest bride.

The sexton and some young men were going to flay the bear. They went to the grindstones to sharpen their knives, and the other people went home and to bed, and Major Fuchs was left alone with the dead bear.

Then he went off to the church again, turned the key once more in the keyhole, climbed once more the narrow, crooked stairs, woke the sleeping pigeons, and entered the belfry.

Afterwards, when the bear was flayed under the Major's supervision, they found a parcel of notes worth five hundred dalers in his jaws. It was impossible to account for their presence there, but after all, it was no ordinary bear, and as the sexton had killed it, the money was clearly his.

When this became known, little Faber, too, began to understand what a glorious deed the sexton had done, and he declared he would be proud to own him as a brother-in-law.

On Friday evening Major Fuchs returned to Ekeby, after having graced an assembly at the sexton's held in honor of the dead bear, and another at the organist's in honor of the new engagement. He walked along with a heavy heart; he felt no delight over his vanquished enemy, and took no pleasure in the splendid bear-skin which the sexton had presented to him.

Perhaps some might imagine that he mourned because little Fröken Faber belonged to another?

Oh, no! that caused him no grief. But what went to his heart was that the old one-eyed forest king was now dead, and he had not been the man to kill him with a silver bullet.

He went up to the cavaliers' wing, where the cavaliers sat round the fire, and without a word he threw the bear-skin down before them. You must not think he related his adventures there and then; it was long, long years before he could be persuaded to tell the true facts of the case. Neither did he make known the Broby parson's hiding-place, and the parson probably never missed the money.

The cavaliers examined the skin.

"It is a beautiful skin," said Beerencreutz; "I wonder why he rose from his winter sleep, or perhaps you shot him in his lair?"

"He was shot in Bro."

"Well, he was not as big as the Gurlita bear, but he must have been a splendid beast," said Gösta.

"If he had been one-eyed," said Kevenhüller, "I should believe you had shot the old man himself, he is so big; but there is no wound or scar near his eyes, so it can't be he."

Fuchs swore first over his stupidity, but afterwards his face lighted up till he looked quite handsome. So the great bear had not fallen to another man's shot!

"Lord God, how good Thou art!" he said, and clasped his hands.

The Auction at Björne

WE young people must often wonder at the stories told us by our elders. "Did you dance every night as long as your beautiful youth lasted?" "Was life for you one long adventure?" we asked them. "Were all girls lovely and amiable in those days, and did Gösta Berling elope with one of them after every ball?"

Then the old people shook their heads and told of the whirling of the spinning-wheels and the boom of the looms, of cooking, of the thunder and crash in the track of the axe through the forests; but before long they harked back again to the old stories. Sledges drove up to the hall door and raced through the dark woods with their load of gay young people, the dancing grew wild, and the violin strings snapped. The wild wave of adventure rushed tumultuously along the shores of Lake Löfven, and its noise was heard afar. The forests swerved and fell, all the powers of destruction were loose, flames flared, the rapids swept away their prey, and wild beasts prowled hungrily round the homesteads. Under the hoofs of the eight-footed horses all quiet happiness was trampled in the dust. And wherever the wild hunt passed, men's hearts flamed up tempestuously, and the women fled from their homes in pale dismay. And we sat wondering, silent, fright-

ened, and yet blissfully happy. "What people they were," we thought to ourselves; "we shall never see their like!"

"Did people in those days never *think* of what they were doing?" we asked.

"Certainly, they did," our elders answered.

"But not as we think," we persisted. Then our elders did not understand what we meant.

For we were thinking of the wonderful spirit of self-analysis which had already taken possession of our minds; we were thinking of him with the icy eyes and the long, knotted fingers—he, who sits in the darkest corner of our souls, and plucks our being to pieces as old women pluck scraps of wool and silk. Piece by piece, the long, hard fingers have dissected us till our whole being lies there like a heap of rags—till all our best feelings, our innermost thoughts, all we have said and done is examined, ransacked, disintegrated, and the icy eyes have watched, and the toothless mouth has sneered and whispered, "See, it is but rags, nothing but rags."

One of the people of those old days had opened her soul to that spirit. He sat there watching at the font of all impulse, sneering both at the good and the evil, understanding all, judging nothing, examining, searching, and plucking to pieces and paralyzing all emotions of the heart and all strength of thought by smiling scornfully at everything.

Marienne Sinclaire bore the spirit of self-analy-

sis within her. She felt his eyes follow every step, every word of hers. Her life had become a play, at which she was the only spectator. She was no longer a human being—she was neither wearied, nor did she rejoice, nor could she love. She played the part of the beautiful Marienne Sinclaire, and the spirit of self-analysis sat with staring eyes and busy fingers and watched her acting. She felt herself divided into two, and half of her being—pale, unfeeling, and scornful—watched the other half's transactions; and the spirit which thus plucked her asunder had never a word of kindness or sympathy for her.

But where had he been, the pale watcher beside the springs of impulse, on the night she had learned to feel life's fulness? Where was he, when she, the wise Marienne, kissed Gösta Berling before the eyes of two hundred people, and when she threw herself into the snowdrift to die in despair? The icy eyes were blinded, and the sneer was paralyzed, for passion had swept through her soul. The wild wave of adventure had thundered in her ears. She had been a whole being during that one awful night.

Oh, god of self-scorn, when Marienne lifted at last her frozen arms to Gösta's neck, then, like old Beerencreutz, thou wert compelled to turn thy eyes from earth and look at the stars! That night thou hadst no power. Thou wast dead while she sang her love hymns, dead when she hurried to Sjö for the Major, dead when she saw the flames redden-

ing the sky over the treetops. See, they have come, the strong storm birds, the demon birds of passion. With wings of fire and claws of steel, they have swooped down upon thee, and flung thee out into the unknown. Thou hast been dead and destroyed. But they, the proud and mighty, they whose path is unknown and who cannot be followed—they have swept onward, and out of the depths of the unknown the spirit of self-observation has arisen again, and again taken possession of Marienne's soul.

She lay ill at Ekeby all through February. She had taken smallpox at Sjö, when she went to find the Major, and the awful sickness had her completely at its mercy, for she had been frightfully chilled and wearied during that night. Death had been very near her, but toward the end of the month she grew better. She was still weak, and was greatly disfigured. She would never again be called beautiful Marienne. This misfortune, which was to bring sorrow over all Värmland as if one of its best treasures had been lost, was known, as yet, only to Marienne and her sick nurse. Even the cavaliers were not aware of it. The room in which the smallpox reigned was closed to all. But where is the spirit of self-analysis stronger than in the long hours of convalescence? There it sits and stares and stares with its icy eyes, and plucks and plucks to pieces our being with its knotted fingers. And if

you look closely, you see behind him another pale being who stares and sneers and paralyzes, and behind him still another and another, all sneering at one another and the whole world. While Marienne lay there and stared at herself with those icy eyes, all feeling died within her. She lay there and played the part of being ill and being unhappy; she played at being in love and being revengeful. She was all this, and yet it was but acting a part. Everything became unreal under the gaze of those eyes watching her, which, again, were watched by another pair, and another, and another in an endless perspective. All life's powers were asleep; she had had strength for burning hate and overwhelming love for one night only. She did not even know if she loved Gösta Berling. She longed to see him to prove if he could carry her out of herself.

While the illness raged she had only one clear thought. She took care that the nature of the fever should remain unknown. She would not see her parents: she had no wish for reconciliation with her father. She knew he would repent if he heard how ill she was. So she commanded that her parents, and others too, in fact, were to be told that her eyes, which were always weak when she visited her native place, compelled her, for a time, to remain in a darkened room. She forbade her nurse to say how ill she was and forbade the cavaliers sending for a doctor from Karlstad. She certainly had the

smallpox, but it was a mild case—the medicine-chest at Ekeby contained all that was necessary to save her life. She never thought of dying: she only waited to be well enough to go with Gõsta to the pastor and arrange for the banns to be published. But now the fever had left her. She was cool and prudent again. It seemed to her as if she alone was wise in this world of fools. She neither loved nor hated; she understood her father, she understood them all. He that understands does not hate. She had been told that Melchior Sinclaire was going to have an auction at Björne and make away with all his possessions so that she would have nothing to inherit from him. They said he intended making the wreck as complete as possible. He would sell the furniture and household goods first, then the horses and cattle and farm implements, and lastly, the estate itself; and he intended putting the money in a bag and sinking it in the Löfven. Her inheritance would be ruin, dissipation, and dismay. Marienne smiled approvingly when she heard this. Such was his character; he was sure to act like that.

It seemed extraordinary to her that she should have poured forth that poem of love. She, too, had dreamed of the miner's hut—she, as well as others. It was wonderful to her that she had ever had a dream. She sighed for nature—she was weary of constantly acting a part. She had never had a strong feeling. She hardly mourned her lost beauty, but she

shuddered at the thought of pity from strangers. Oh, a second of self-forgetfulness, a gesture, a word, an act which was not premeditated!

One day, when the room had been disinfected, and she lay dressed upon the sofa, she sent for Gösta Berling. They told her that he had gone to the auction at Björne.

. . . .

At Björne there was, in truth, a great auction going on. It was an old and wealthy estate, and people had come from great distances to take part in the sale.

Melchior Sinçlaire had gathered all the household belongings into the great salon. There were thousands of things there, thrown in heaps which reached from the floor to the ceiling.

He had gone about the house like a destroying angel on Judgment Day, and gathered together all he intended to sell. The kitchen utensils, the black cauldrons, wooden chairs, tin pots, and copper pans were left in peace, for they did not remind him of Marienne, but there was little else that escaped his wrath.

He broke into Marienne's room, carrying away everything. Her doll cupboard stood there and her bookcase, the little chair he had ordered to be carved for her, her clothes and ornaments, her sofa and bed—they must all go.

And he went from room to room. He snatched up anything he took a fancy to, and carried great burdens down to the auction room. He panted under the weight of sofas and marble tables, but he persisted in his work. And he threw it all down in the greatest confusion. He had torn the cupboards open and brought out the family silver. Away with it! Marienne had used it. He gathered up armfuls of snow-white damask and smooth linen towels with wide open-work hems—honest, homemade stuff, the fruit of years of toil—and tumbled it all in a heap. Away with it! Marienne was not worthy to inherit it. He stormed through the rooms with piles of porcelain, caring little if he broke dozens of plates, and he carried off the teacups on which the family crest was painted. Away with them! Let who will use them. He brought downstairs mountains of bed-clothes from the garrets—pillows and bolsters so soft, you could sink in them as in a wave. Away with them! Marienne had slept in them.

He cast furious glances at the well-known furniture. There was n't a chair or a sofa that she had not used, nor a picture that she had n't looked at, nor a chandelier that had n't lighted her, nor a mirror that had n't reflected her beauty. Gloomily he shook his fist at that world of memories. He could have rushed at them with lifted club and broken them in pieces.

Yet it seemed to him an even greater revenge to

make an auction of it all. Away to strangers with it! Away to be soiled in the cotters' huts, to be destroyed in the charge of the stranger! Did n't he know them well? Those old pieces of furniture, fallen from high estate, to be seen in the peasants' huts, fallen as his daughter had fallen! Away with them all to the four corners of heaven, so that no eye could find them, no hand could gather them together again!

When the auction opened, he had filled half the salon with an incredible jumble of household goods.

Across the room he had placed a long counter. Behind this stood the auctioneer and cried the goods, and the clerk sat there making notes, and Melchior Sinclaire had a cask of gin standing beside him. At the other end of the room, in the hall, and out in the yard, stood the buyers. There was a great crowd of people and much shouting and laughter. The sale was brisk, and one thing was cried after another, while by the side of his cask, with all his possessions in indescribable confusion behind him, sat Melchior Sinclaire, half drunk and half crazy. The hair stood stiffly erect above his red face, his eyes rolled bloodshot and furious. He shouted and laughed as if he were in the best of tempers, and he called up every purchaser and gave him a glass of his gin.

Among those who saw him thus was Gösta Berling, who had come in with the crowd, but avoided

being seen by Melchior Sinclaire. He became thoughtful at the sight, and his heart contracted as with a foreboding of misfortune.

He wondered where Marienne's mother could be while all this was going on, and he went, much against his will, but driven by fate, to seek her.

He went through many rooms before he found her. The great land proprietor had but short patience and little liking for women's tears and wailing. He had grown tired of seeing her tears flow at the fate overtaking all her treasures. He was furious to see that she could mourn over linen and bedclothes when his beautiful daughter was lost to them, and with clenched fists he had driven her before him through all the house, into the kitchen, and even into the pantry.

She could go no further, and he had been satisfied at seeing her there, crouching under the step-ladder awaiting a blow, perhaps a death-blow. He let her remain there, but he locked the door and put the key into his pocket. She might remain there while the auction lasted. She would not starve, and his ears were spared her wailing.

There she sat still, a prisoner in her own pantry, when Gösta walked down the corridor to the kitchen, and he saw her face at a high little window which opened in the wall. She had climbed up the step-ladder and was gazing out of her prison.

"What is Aunt Gustafva doing up there?" he asked.

"He has locked me in," she whispered.

"What! Melchior Sinclaire?"

"Yes, I thought he would kill me. But, Gösta—get the key of the salon door and go into the kitchen and open the pantry door with it so that I can get out. That key fits."

Gösta obeyed, and a few minutes later the little woman was in the kitchen, which was quite deserted.

"Aunt should have told one of the servant-girls to open the door with that key," said Gösta.

"Do you think I would teach them that trick? I should never have anything left in peace in the pantry after that. And besides, I began to put the upper shelves there into order. They needed it. I can't understand how I allowed so much rubbish to collect there."

"Aunt has so much to look after," said Gösta.

"It 's too true. If I am not seeing to everything, neither the spinning nor weaving goes right. And if . . . " She paused and wiped a tear from her eyes. "God help me, what nonsense I 'm talking!" she said. "I won't have much to look after now. He is selling all we have."

"Yes, it is a miserable business," said Gösta.

"You remember the big glass in the drawing-room, Gösta? It was so beautiful because the glass

was all in one piece and without a scratch, and there wasn't a spot on the gilding. I got it from my mother, and now he wants to sell it."

"He is mad."

"You may well say so. It can't be anything else. He won't stop till he has beggared us, and we must tread the road like the Major's wife."

"It will not go so far as that."

"Yes, Gösta. When the Major's wife left Ekeby, she foretold misfortune for us, and it has come. She wouldn't have allowed it—she would never have allowed him to sell Björne. And think of it—his own porcelain—the real china cups from his own home are to be sold! She would never have allowed it."

"But what is the matter with him?" asked Gösta.

"Oh, it is all because Marienne has not returned. He has gone about waiting and waiting. He has walked up and down the lane for days waiting for her. He will go mad with longing, but I daren't say anything."

"Marienne thinks he is angry with her."

"Oh, no, she doesn't think that; she knows him, but she is proud and will not take the first step. They are proud and hard, both of them, and they are in no trouble. It is I who must stand between them."

"Aunt knows that Marienne is going to marry me?"

"Oh, Gösta, she never will do that. She says it only to madden him. She is too spoiled to marry a poor man, and too proud, too. Go back now and tell her that if she does not come home soon, all her inheritance will be wasted. He will destroy it all without getting anything for it."

Gösta was really angry with her. There she sat on the big kitchen table, and had no heart for anything but her looking-glass and her porcelain.

"You ought to be ashamed, Aunt Gustafva," he exclaimed. "You turn your daughter out into the snowdrifts, and then you think it simply wickedness of her not to return home. And you think no better of her than that she would desert one she cares for because she will be disinherited?"

"Dear Gösta, don't be angry—you also. I hardly know what I'm saying. I tried to open the door for Marienne, but he dragged me away. They always say that I don't understand things. I don't grudge you Marienne, Gösta, if you can make her happy. It isn't so easy to make a woman happy, Gösta."

Gösta looked at her. How could he have lifted an angry voice against her? She looked so frightened, so hunted to death; but she was kind hearted.

"Aunt has not inquired how Marienne is," he said, softly.

She burst into tears.

"Don't be angry if I ask," she cried. "I have

longed to ask you all the time. Think of it—I know nothing about her except that she is alive. I have heard nothing from her all this time, not even when I sent her some clothes, and I thought neither of you meant to tell me anything."

Gösta could not withstand the pity of it. He was wild and giddy. God sometimes sent His wolves after him to compel his obedience, but the tears of that old mother and her wailing were worse to bear than the howling of the wolves. He told her the truth.

"Marienne has been ill all the time," he said. "She has had smallpox. She was to sit up to-day on the sofa. I have not seen her since that first night."

With a bound Fru Gustafva was on the floor. She left Gösta standing there and rushed at once to her husband. The people in the auction room saw her come and whisper something eagerly in his ear. They saw his face redden, while his hand resting on the tap of the cask twisted it till the gin flowed over the floor. It seemed to all that she brought important news which would stop the sale. The auctioneer's voice ceased, the clerks stopped writing, there were no further bids.

Melchior Sinclaire awoke from his thoughts. "Well," he screamed, "aren't you to go on?" And the auction was in full swing again.

Gösta still sat in the kitchen when Fru Gustafva came back weeping to him. "It was no use," she

said; "I thought he would stop when he heard Marienne had been ill, but he lets them continue. He would like to stop, but he is ashamed now."

Gösta shrugged his shoulders and bade her farewell.

In the hall he met Sintram.

"A devilish funny affair," exclaimed Sintram, rubbing his hands. "You are a master-hand at getting up such things, Gösta."

"It will be funnier still in a little while," whispered Gösta. "The Broby parson is here with a sledgeful of money. They say he wants to buy all Björne and pay the money down, and I should just like to see Melchior Sinclaire then, Uncle Sintram."

Sintram dropped his head between his shoulders and laughed to himself a long time. Then he made off to the auction room and straight to Melchior Sinclaire.

"If you want a glass, Sintram, you have got to make a bid first."

Sintram went up close to him. "You have good luck as usual, Melchior," he said. "A great man has come to Björne with a sledgeful of money. He is ready to buy Björne with all its goods and chattels. He has arranged with a number of people to do the bidding for him. I suppose he does n't want to show himself at once."

"You may as well say who it is, and I will give you a smack for your trouble."

Sintram took the smack and retreated two steps before he answered, "It is the Broby parson, Brother Melchior."

Melchior Sinclaire had many better friends than the Broby parson. There was a feud of many years' standing between them. There were stories of the great land proprietor having lain in ambush on dark nights on the road where the parson must pass, and having given many a good honest thrashing to that toady and grinder of the poor.

And though Sintram had retreated a few steps, he did not quite escape the great man's anger. He got a wineglass between his eyes and the whole cask on his feet, but this was followed by a scene which gladdened his heart for many a day.

"Does the Broby parson want my estate?" screamed Sinclaire. "Are you standing there and bidding for the Broby parson? You ought to be ashamed; you ought to know better!" He caught up a candlestick and an inkstand and flung them at the crowd. It was his heart's bitterness finding expression. Roaring like a wild beast, he shook his fist at the bystanders, and flung whatever he could lay his hands on at them. The brandy bottles and glasses flew across the room; he was beside himself with rage. "The auction is over," he shouted. "Out with you! Never while I live shall the Broby parson possess Björne. Out with you all; I'll teach you to buy in for the Broby parson!" He attacked

the auctioneer and the clerks; in trying to escape, they overturned the counter, and the furious squire was in the midst of the crowd. A stampede ensued —more than a hundred men rushed toward the door fleeing from one. And he stood still shouting, "Out with you!" He sent curses after them, and now and then he swung over his head a chair, which he had used as a weapon. He followed them into the hall, but no further. When the last stranger left the doorstep, he returned to the salon and bolted the door after him. Then he gathered together a mattress and a pair of cushions, and lay down and went to sleep amid all the wild disorder, and did not wake till next day.

When Gösta got home he was told that Marienne wished to speak to him. It was just what he wanted. He had wondered how he might see her. When he entered the dimly lighted room in which she lay, he was obliged to pause a moment at the door, for he could not distinguish her.

"Stay where you are, Gösta," said Marienne to him. "It is perhaps dangerous to come near me."

But Gösta had come, taking the stairs in two strides, trembling with eager longing. What cared he now for infection? He longed for the bliss of again seeing her. She was so beautiful, his beloved. No one had such soft hair, such a clear, open brow; all her face was a play of lovely curves. He thought of her eyebrows, sharply and clearly pencilled like

the stamens of a lily, of the daring curve of the nose, and the soft wave of the lips, and the long oval of her cheek, and the refined cut of her chin. And he thought of the clear complexion, of the bewitching expression made by the black eyebrows under the fair hair, and of the blue eyes in their white setting, and of the gleam of light which hid in the corners of them. She was so lovely, his beloved. He thought of the warm heart hiding under her haughty mien. She had strength for love and self-sacrifice under that fine skin and those proud words. It was bliss to see her again. He had made two steps of the stairs, did she think he would stand now at the door? He sprang through the room and knelt at her sofa. He meant to see her, kiss her, and bid her farewell. He loved her, and would probably never cease to love her, but his heart was accustomed to suffering. Oh, where was he to find her, the rose without support or root which he might gather and call his own? He could not even keep her he had found deserted and half dead in the snowdrift. When would his love raise its song, a song so high and pure that no discord would rend it? When could his happiness build on a ground which no other soul longed for? He thought of his farewell to her.

"There is great trouble in your home to-day," he would say. "My heart ached at the sight of it. You must go home and bring your father to his

senses. Your mother lives in constant fear of her life. You must go home again, my dearest."

He had those renunciating words on his lips, but they remained unuttered. He fell on his knees by the pillow, and he took her head between his hands and kissed it, and after that he found no words. His heart was beating so violently, it threatened to burst its bonds. The smallpox had gone over the lovely face. Its complexion was coarsened. Never again would the red blood show in the fair cheeks, nor the blue veins line the temples. The eyes lay heavy under swollen lids, the eyebrows were gone, and the white of the eyes was tinged with yellow. All was ruined. The daring curves were lost in heaviness. There were many who mourned Marienne Sinclaire's beauty, now lost. All over Värmland the people grieved over her lost fairness, her shining eyes and beautiful hair. Beauty is prized there as nowhere else, and the people sorrowed as if they had lost one of the brightest jewels in their crown, as if the sunniness of life had received a flaw.

But the first man who saw her after she had lost her beauty did not grieve.

Unutterable feelings filled his soul. The longer he gazed at her, the happier he grew. His love increased like a river in spring-time, it swelled from his heart in waves of fire, it filled all his being, it rose to his eyes in tears, sighed on his lips, shook in his hands and in all his being.

Oh, to love her, protect and cherish her! To be her slave, her guardian!

Love is strong when it has gone through the fire of pain. He could not talk to Marienne of separation and self-sacrifice now. He could not leave her. He was indebted to her for his life. He would have committed crimes for her sake.

He could not speak one sensible word, only wept and kissed her, till the old nurse came to say it was time he should go.

When he was gone, Marienne lay and thought of his being so moved. "It is good to be loved like that," she thought.

Yes, it was good to be loved, but how was it with herself? What did she feel? Oh, nothing, less than nothing.

Was her love dead, or what had become of it? Where had the child of her heart hidden itself? Did it live, had it crept into the darkest corner of her heart and lay there freezing under the gaze of those icy eyes, frightened by that pale, sneering laugh, half smothered under those hard, knotted fingers?

"Oh, my love," she sighed, "my heart's child! Do you live, or are you dead, as dead as my beauty?"

. . . .

Next day the great squire, Melchior Sinclaire, went early to his wife.

"See that everything is put in order again here, Gustafva," he said; "I am going to bring Marienne home."

"Yes, dear Melchior, I will put it all in order again," she answered.

And everything was clear between them.

An hour later he was on his way to Ekeby. There were not many nobler-looking or kindlier old gentlemen than the great squire, as he sat in his sledge in his best fur coat and belt. His hair was smoothly combed, but his face was pale, and his eyes appeared to have sunk in their sockets.

And there seemed no end to the glory which streamed from heaven that February morning. The snow glittered like a girl's eyes when the first notes of a waltz are being played. The birches stretched their fine network of red-brown branches over the sky, and some of them had fingers of small, sparkling icicles. There was a glory and holiday glitter about the day. The horses pranced, lifting high their forefeet, and the coachman cracked his whip in pure joy. After a short drive, the sledge drew up before the great entrance to Ekeby.

A servant came out.

"Where are your masters?" asked the squire.

"They are hunting the great bear on Gurlita Cliff."

"All of them?"

"All of them, sir. He that has not gone for the

sake of the bear has certainly gone for the sake of the provision basket."

Melchior Sinclaire laughed till it echoed in the empty yard. He gave the servant a daler for his sharp answer.

"Go and tell my daughter that I have come to fetch her. She won't freeze, for I have the sledge cover and a wolf-skin rug to wrap her in."

"Will not the squire please to enter?"

"Thanks. I am well enough here."

The man disappeared, and Melchior began his waiting. He was in such splendid mood that day, nothing could anger him. He expected to wait some time for Marienne, probably she was not up yet. He must amuse himself by looking about him.

A long icicle hung from the point of the roof, and the sun gave himself much trouble in melting it. It began from the top, melted a drop, and wanted it to run down the icicle and fall to earth, but before it reached halfway, it froze up afresh, and the sunshine made another effort and another, but always failed. At last there came a free-lance of a little sunbeam, which took possession of the tip of the icicle—a tiny little sunbeam, which shone and glittered with eagerness, till at last it gained its point, and a drop fell with a splash to the ground.

The great land proprietor watched it and laughed. "That was n't at all so stupid of you," he said to the sunbeam.

The courtyard was quiet and deserted. Not a sound was heard from the big house, but the squire was not impatient. He knew that womenkind need a long time to get ready.

He looked at the dovecot. There was a wire over the opening. The birds were shut in for the winter so that the hawks might not get them. Every now and then a dove came and stuck its white head through the bars.

"She is waiting for spring," said Sinclaire, "but she must have patience yet."

The pigeon came so regularly to the bars that he took out his watch and timed her. She put out her head precisely every third minute.

"No, my little friend," he said; "do you think that spring can be ready in three minutes? You must learn to wait."

And he had to wait himself, but he was in no hurry.

The horses scraped the snow impatiently with their feet at first, but they soon became drowsy standing blinking in the sunshine. They leaned their heads together and went to sleep.

The coachman sat stiffly on his seat, with his reins and whip in his hand, facing the sun, and slept—slept so soundly that he snored.

But Melchior Sinclaire was not asleep. He never felt less like it. He had seldom spent such pleasant hours as while waiting there for Marienne. She had

been ill. She could not come before, but she would come now. Of course she would, and all would be well again. She would understand now that he was not angry with her. He had come for her himself with two horses and a sledge.

Near the opening of the beehive a great titmouse was engaged upon a perfectly fiendish trick. He must have his dinner, of course, and he tapped, therefore, at the opening with his sharp little beak. Inside the hive the bees hung in a big, dark cluster. Everything within was in the strictest order. The workers dealt out the rations, and the cupbearers ran from mouth to mouth with the nectar and ambrosia. With a constant creeping movement those hanging in the middle of the swarm changed places with those on the outside, so that warmth and comfort might be equally divided.

They hear the titmouse tapping, and the whole hive becomes a buzz of curiosity. Is it a friend or an enemy? Is there danger to the community? The queen has a bad conscience, she cannot wait in peace and quietness. Can it be the ghosts of murdered drones that are tapping out there? "Go and see what it is," she orders Sister Doorkeeper, and she goes. With a "Long live the Queen!" she rushes out and—ha!—the titmouse has got her! With outstretched neck and wings, trembling with eagerness, he catches, kills, and eats her, and no one carries the tale of her fate to her companions. But

the titmouse continues to tap and the queen to send forth her doorkeepers, and they all disappear. No one returns to tell her who is tapping. Ugh! it is awful to be alone in the dark hive—the spirit of revenge is there. Oh, to be without ears! If one only felt no curiosity, if one could only wait in patience!

Melchior Sinclaire laughed till tears filled his eyes at the silly womenkind in the beehive and the sharp, greeny-yellow little rascal outside.

There is no great difficulty in waiting when you are sure of your object, and when there is so much to engage your thoughts.

There comes the big yard dog. He steps along on the tips of his toes, keeps his eyes on the ground, and wags his tail gently, as if he were on the most indifferent errand. Suddenly he begins digging in the snow. The old rascal has certainly buried stolen goods there; but just as he lifts his head to see if he can enjoy in peace, he is surprised to see two magpies sitting right before him.

"You thief!" cry the magpies, looking like conscience itself, "we are police constables; give up your booty."

"Silence! you rabble, I am the yard bailiff."

"Just the man," they sneer.

The dog springs at them, and they fly up with lazy wing. He rushes on, jumping and barking; but while he hunts one, the other has returned to

the meat. She pulls and tears at it, but cannot lift it. The dog snatches it away, places it between his forepaws, and begins his dinner. The magpies seat themselves before him, and continue their disparaging remarks. He glances savagely at them, and when it gets quite too bad, he springs up and chases them away.

The sun began to sink behind the western hills. Melchior Sinclaire looked at his watch; it was three o'clock, and mother had had dinner ready at twelve.

Just then the servant came out and said Marienne wished to speak to him.

He placed the wolf-skin rug over his arm and marched up the stairs in the best of humors.

When Marienne heard his heavy step on the stairs, she did not know whether she would accompany him home or not. She only knew she must put an end to the waiting. She had hoped the cavaliers would come home, but they did not. She must then take matters in hand herself, she could not bear it any longer. She had imagined he would go his way in anger after waiting five minutes, or that he would break the door in, or set fire to the house.

But there he sat, calm and smiling, and waited. She felt neither love nor hate toward him; but an inner voice seemed to warn her against giving herself into his power again, and besides, she wished to keep her word to Gösta.

If he had fallen asleep, if he had spoken or been

restless or shown a sign of doubt, if he had even ordered the sledge to stand in the shade — but he was all patience and certainty — sure, so infectiously sure, that she would come if he only waited.

Her head ached, every nerve quivered. She could get no peace while he sat there. It seemed as if his will were dragging her, bound hand and foot, downstairs.

Then she decided to speak to him.

Before he came she made the nurse pull up the blinds, and she lay so that her face was distinctly seen. By this she meant to put him to the proof; but Melchior Sinclaire was a wonderful man that day.

When he saw her, he made no gesture, no cry of surprise. It seemed as if he saw no difference in her. She knew how he had prized her beauty; but he showed no grief now, and kept control over all his being so as not to cause her any farther sorrow. This touched her, and she began to understand how it was that her mother still loved him. He showed no sign of hesitation. He came with no reproaches or excuses.

"I will wrap you in the wolf-skin, Marienne. It isn't cold, it has been lying on my knee all the time."

In any case he went forward to the fire and warmed it. Afterwards he helped her to rise, wrapped the fur about her, drew a shawl over her head, pulled

it under her arms, and tied it at the back. She let him do it. She had no will. It was good to be commanded, it was restful to have no will. Best of all for one so tortured by self-analysis, for one who owned neither a thought nor a feeling that was her own!

Melchior Sinclaire lifted her up, carried her down to the sledge, threw back the cover, placed her beside him, and drove away from Ekeby.

She shut her eyes and sighed, half in satisfaction, half in sadness. She was leaving life, real life, behind her, but after all, it was a matter of indifference to her, who could not really live, but only play a part.

. . . .

A few days later her mother arranged that she should see Gösta. She sent for him while her husband had gone for a long walk up to the timber stacks, and took him to Marienne.

Gösta entered the room, but he neither greeted nor spoke to her. He remained standing at the door, looking at the floor like an awkward boy.

"But, Gösta!" exclaimed Marienne. She was sitting in her armchair and looked at him half amused.

"Yes, that is my name."

"Come here, come nearer to me, Gösta."

He came forward quietly, but did not lift his eyes.

"Come nearer, kneel here!"

"Good God! what is the use of all this?" he exclaimed, but obeyed.

"Gösta, I wanted to tell you I thought it best to come home."

"We will hope that they do not turn Fröken Marienne into the snowdrifts again."

"Oh, Gösta, don't you love me any more? Do you think me so ugly?"

He drew her head down and kissed her, but he was just as cold as before.

She was really amused. If he chose to be jealous of her parents, what did it matter? It would pass. It amused her now to win him back. She hardly knew why she wanted him, but she did. She remembered that he had freed her from herself once at least; he was probably the only one who could do it again. And she began to speak eagerly to him. She said it had not been her intention to desert him, but they must, for the sake of appearances, break this engagement for a time. He had seen himself that her father was on the verge of madness, and her mother lived in constant fear of her life. He must understand that she had been obliged to return home.

Then his anger found words. She need not pretend. He would no longer be her plaything. She had jilted him as soon as she found she might return home, and he could not love her any more. On the day when he came home from the bear hunt

and found her gone without a word of farewell, his blood had stood still in his veins, and he had nearly died of sorrow. He could not love her after the pain she had caused him. And she had never really loved him. She was a coquette who wanted some one to kiss and caress her here at home too—that was all.

Did he think, then, she usually let young men kiss and caress her?

Oh, yes, why not? Women were not so holy as they looked. They were made up of selfishness and coquetry. No, if she knew what he had felt when he came home from the woods and found her gone! He felt as if he had waded in ice water. He would never get over that pain. It would follow him all his life, and he would never be the same again.

She tried to explain to him how it all happened; she reminded him that she had been true through it all.

Yes, but it was all the same, for he did n't love her any longer. He had seen through her, she was selfish. She never had loved him, she had left him without a word.

He constantly returned to this, and she almost enjoyed the scene, for she could not be angry. She understood his anger so well, she did not even fear any real break between them. But at last she grew anxious. Had such a change really taken place that he cared no more for her?

"Gösta," she said, "was I selfish when I went to Sjö for the Major? I remembered very well that the smallpox was there. Neither is it pleasant to be out in thin shoes in the cold snow."

"Love lives by love, and not by service and good works," he replied.

"You want us to be strangers in the future?"

"Yes."

"Gösta Berling is very changeable."

"They say so."

He was apathetic, impossible to awaken, and really she felt herself even colder. Self-analysis sat and sneered at her attempt to play at being in love.

"Gösta," she pleaded at last, "I have never wilfully wronged you, even if it has seemed like it. I beg you, forgive me!"

"I cannot forgive you."

She knew that if she had had any whole feeling about her she could have won him, and she tried to act a passionate love. The icy eyes mocked her, but she tried in any case. She did not want to lose him.

"Don't go, Gösta, don't leave me in anger. Think how ugly I have become now. No one will love me again."

"I don't love you either," he answered. "You must get accustomed to having your heart trampled upon, as others do."

"Gösta, I have never been able to love any one

but you. Forgive me, and don't leave me. You are the only one who can save me from myself."

He pushed her aside.

"You are not speaking the truth," he said, with icy calm. "I don't know what you want of me, but I see you are lying. Why would you keep me? You are so rich, there will always be lovers for you."

So he left her. And as soon as he closed the door, longing and pain made entrance in all their majesty into Marienne's heart. It was Love, her heart's one child, who came forth from the corner where the icy eyes had hidden him. He, the longed-for one, came now when it was too late. All-powerful, he took possession, and longing and pain bore up his kingly mantle.

When Marienne could with certainty say to herself that Gösta Berling had deserted her, she experienced a purely physical pain, so dreadful that she nearly lost consciousness. She pressed her hands against her heart, and sat for hours in the same position, fighting her tearless grief. And she suffered —she, herself, not a stranger nor an outsider. She, herself, suffered it all. Why had her father come and separated them? Her love had not been dead. It was only that in the weakness subsequent to her illness she could not feel its power.

Oh, God, oh, God, to lose him! Oh, God, to have awakened too late! He was the only man who had conquered her heart. She could bear all from him.

Angry words and harshness from him only bowed her down in humble love. If he struck her, she would creep to his hand like a dog and kiss it. She did not know what to do to find alleviation for this dumb pain.

She caught up a pen and some paper and began to write. She wrote of her love and her longing, and she begged not for his love but for mercy. It was a kind of verse that she wrote. When she finished, she thought that perhaps if he saw it he might believe in her love. Why should she not send it to him? She would send it next day, and she quite believed that it would bring him back to her.

Next day she went about in mental strife with herself. What she had written seemed so weak, so feeble. It had neither rhyme nor metre: it was only prose. He might laugh at such poetry, and her pride awoke, too. If he did not love her, it was a great degradation to beg for his love. Now and again prudence whispered that she ought to be thankful to have escaped the connection with Gösta Berling and all the wretched circumstances it would bring in its train. But the aching of her heart was so great that her feelings, after all, must have their way.

Three days later she put the verses in an envelope and wrote Gösta Berling's name upon it. Still they were not sent. Before she found a suitable messenger, she heard such tales of Gösta Berling that she felt it was too late to win him back. But it became

the sorrow of her life that she had not sent the verses in time to win him. All her pain circled round that point. "If I had not waited so long; if I had not let so many days go by." Those written words would have given her happiness or at least life's reality. She was certain they would have brought him back.

Sorrow did for her the same service love would have done. It moulded her into a whole individuality with a strength of devotion for good or evil. Strong feelings streamed through her soul, never again frozen by the spirit of self-analysis. And so, in spite of her lost beauty, she was greatly loved. Yet they say she never forgot Gösta Berling. She mourned him as one mourns over a wasted life.

And her poor verses, which were much read at one time, have long since been forgotten. Yet they are very touching, as I look at them, written on yellowed paper in faded ink, in a close, elegant handwriting. There is the longing of a whole life bound up in those poor words, and I copy them with a mysterious sense of awe, as if some secret strength lay in them.

I beg you to read and think them over. Who knows what power they might have had if they had been sent? They are passionate enough to bear witness to true feeling. Perhaps they would have brought him back to her. They are tender and wistful in their awkward formlessness. No one would

wish them different. No one would wish them bound in the chains of rhyme and metre, and yet it is sad to remember that it was perhaps this imperfection which prevented her sending them in time.

I beg you to read them and to love them. It was a human heart in great need that inspired them.

"*Child, you have loved, but ne'er again*
Shall you taste of the pleasure of love.
The storms of passion have shaken your soul;
Be thankful you'll now be at rest.
Ne'ermore shall you soar to the heights of love;
Be thankful you now are at rest!
Ne'er again shall you sink to the depths of pain—
Ne'er again.

"*Child, you have loved, but ne'er again*
Will your soul ever burst into flame.
You were filled, like a field of sun-dried grass,
For a moment with burning fire.
Before the clouds of smoke and the burning coal,
Heaven's birds fled forth with frightened screams.
Let them turn again! for never again—
You'll ne'er burn again.

"*Child, he is gone—*
And with him all love and the pleasures of love—
He whom you had loved, as if he had taught
Your pinions flight in the heavens above,

He whom you loved, as if he had given you
The only safe spot in an overwhelmed world.
He is gone—he who alone understood how to open
The door of your heart.

"*I would entreat you for one thing, oh, my beloved!—*
Lay not on me the burden of hate!
The weakest of all weak things is it not a human heart?
How should it then endure the awful thought
That it is a torment to others?
Oh, my beloved, if you would kill me,
Seek not daggers or poison or rope;

"*Let me but know that you would have me turn*
From earth's green fields, from the kingdom of life,
And I will sink into my grave.
You gave me the life of life, you gave me love,
But you take your love again. Oh, I know it well,
But turn it not to hate!
Oh, remember—I would still live—
Yet I would die beneath the burden of hate."

The Young Countess

THE young Countess slept till ten o'clock every morning, and liked to have fresh bread every day on the breakfast table. The young Countess did tambour work and read poetry; she understood nothing of cooking or weaving. The young Countess was decidedly spoiled. But she was joyous and let her happiness shine upon everything and everybody. The long sleep in the morning and the fresh bread were easily forgiven her, for she was a spendthrift in doing good to the poor and was friendly to every one.

Her father was a Swedish nobleman, who had spent all his life in Italy, kept prisoner there by the beauty of the country and by one of its beautiful daughters. When Count Henrik Dohna had travelled in Italy, he had been received in their home, he had learned to know the daughters, had married one of them and brought her back to Sweden.

She, who had always known Sweden and had been brought up to love all that was Swedish, was very happy in the "Bear Country." She whirled along so gaily in the long dance of pleasure that circled round the Löfven shore, you might imagine she had always lived there. She understood little of what it meant to be a countess. There was no state-

liness, no stiffness, no patronizing air about that gay young creature.

The old gentlemen were perhaps the most fond of her. After they had seen her at a ball, you could be quite certain that every one of them—the Judge at Munkerud and the Rector of Bro, Melchior Sinclaire and the Captain at Berga—they all confided to their wives in the strictest confidence that if they had met her thirty or forty years ago—!

"Yes, but she certainly had not been born then," cried the old ladies. And the next time they met they teased the young Countess about stealing the hearts of the old gentlemen from them.

The old ladies watched her with a certain amount of anxiety. They remembered so well Countess Märta. She, too, had been joyous and good and beloved when she first came to Borg. And she was now nothing but a vain coquette, and could think of nothing but amusement. "If she only had a husband who would make her do some work," said the old ladies. "If she would only set up a loom"—for to weave is a comfort for all sorrow, it absorbs all other interests, and has been the saving of many a woman.

The young Countess wished very earnestly to be a good housewife. She knew of nothing better than to be a happy wife in a happy home, and often during one of the big assemblies she came and sat down among the old ladies.

"Henrik wishes so much that I should become

a clever manager," she used to say, "as his mother is. Do teach me how you set up a loom!"

And the old ladies sighed a two-fold sigh—the first over Count Henrik, who could imagine his mother to be a good housewife; and the second over the difficulty of initiating any one so young and ignorant into such a complicated thing. You had only to mention skeins and heddles, mounting single and double threading, and it all spun round in her head.

No one who saw the young Countess could help wondering why she married that stupid Count Henrik.

He who is stupid is to be pitied, whoever he is, but he is most to be pitied if he lives in Värmland. There were already many stories abroad about his stupidity, and he was only a few years over twenty. The way he entertained Anna Stjärnhök during a sleighing party is a specimen.

"You are very beautiful, Anna," he said.

"Nonsense, Henrik!"

"You are the most beautiful girl in all Värmland."

"Certainly I'm not."

"You are, in any case, the loveliest at this sleighing party."

"Oh, no, Henrik, I'm not."

"Well, you are certainly the best looking in this sledge. You can't deny that?"

No, she could not deny that.

For Count Henrik was not handsome. He was as ugly as he was stupid. They said of him that the head on his shoulders had been an inheritance in the family for a few hundred years, therefore the brain was so worn out in the present possessor. "It is clear he has no head of his own," they said; "he has borrowed his father's. He dare not bend it, he is afraid it might drop off. He is already quite yellow and wrinkled; his head has evidently been in use both in his father's and grandfather's time, otherwise the hair would not be so thin and his lips so bloodless and his chin so sharp."

He was constantly surrounded by a crowd of jokers who tempted him into saying stupid things, and then they collected them, spread them abroad, and helped them out.

It was a mercy he noticed nothing. He was dignified and pompous in all he did, he never dreamed others were different; respectability had taken bodily shape in him — he moved languidly, he walked stiffly, he never turned his head without his whole body following it.

One day, some years ago, he had been at Munkerud, at the Judge's. He had ridden there in tall hat, yellow riding-trousers, and shining boots, sitting stiffly and proudly in his saddle. His arrival passed off very well, but when he rode away it happened that one of the overhanging branches in the

birch alley knocked his hat off. He descended, put his hat on, and rode away once more under the same branch. Again the hat was knocked off. This was repeated four times.

The Judge came out at last, and said, "Suppose you try riding to the side of the branch next time!"

And he passed it successfully the fifth time.

And yet, in spite of his ancient head, the young Countess was fond of him. Of course, when she saw him in Rome, she did not know he was surrounded by such a martyr-like halo of stupidity. There had been something of a youthful glamour over him then, and they had been married in such very romantic circumstances. You should have heard her relate how Count Henrik eloped with her. Monks and cardinals had been furious that she should desert her mother's religion and become a Protestant. All the populace were in an uproar, her father's palace was besieged, and Henrik was pursued by bandits. Her mother and sister prayed her to give up the marriage, but her father was wild to think the Italian rabble should dare to try and hinder him from giving his daughter to whomever he chose. He commanded Count Henrik to elope with her, and as it was impossible for them to be married at home without it being discovered, she had crept with Henrik along back streets and all kinds of dark passages to the Swedish Consulate, and when she had abjured her Catholic faith and become a Protestant,

they were instantly married and came north in a swiftly travelling coach. "There was no time for any banns, you see, it was quite impossible," the young Countess used to say; "and, of course, it was n't as nice being married at the Consulate as in one of the beautiful churches, but Henrik could n't possibly get me in any other way. They are all so hasty there—both papa and mamma and the cardinals and monks, all of them. We were obliged to keep it secret, and if the people had seen us leave home, they would certainly have killed us both—just to save my soul. Henrik's was, of course, lost already."

But the young Countess was fond of her husband even when they arrived at Borg and lived a quieter life. She loved the splendor of the old name he bore and the fame of his adventurous forefathers. She liked to see how her presence softened him, and to hear his voice take another tone when she talked to him. And besides he was fond of her and spoiled her, and, after all, she was married to him. The young Countess could not imagine a married woman not caring for her husband.

In a certain way he answered her ideal of manliness. He was just and loved the truth. He had never broken his promised word. She considered him a true nobleman.

. . . .

On the 18th of March, the high sheriff, Schärling,

celebrated his birthday, and there were many who drove up Broby Hill that day. From east and west, known and unknown, the invited and uninvited guests came on that occasion to the official residence. All were welcome. There was meat and drink for all, and in the dancing-hall there was room enough for the dancers from seven parishes.

The young Countess was there too, as she was everywhere where you could expect dancing and amusement. But she was not gay when she arrived, it almost seemed as though she had a presentiment that it was now her turn to be involved in the wild wave of adventure.

She sat and watched the setting sun while driving to the assembly. It sank from a cloudless sky, and left no golden-edged cloudlets after it. Pale grey twilight pierced by gusts of chilly wind covered all the country.

She saw the strife of day and night, and how everything living seemed to fear it. Horses hurried forward the last load to gain their stables as quickly as possible. The wood-cutters hurried home from the forest, the dairymaids from the farmyard. Wild beasts howled in the forest clearing. Day, the beloved of mankind, was conquered.

Colors faded, the light disappeared. Cold and ugliness was all she saw. All she hoped, all she loved, all she had ever done seemed wrapped in the twilight's grey coverlet. It was an hour of weariness,

depression, and helplessness for her, as it was for all nature.

She remembered that her heart, which now in its joy lifted all life into a shimmer of purple and gold, might lose its strength to raise her world.

"Oh, helplessness, my own heart's helplessness!" she said to herself. "Crushing goddess of the twilight, one day you will conquer my soul, and I shall see life ugly and hard, as perhaps it is, and my hair will whiten then, and my back will bend, and my mind will grow dull."

At that moment the sledge swung into the courtyard, and, as she looked up, her eyes fell upon a barred window in a side wing of the house and on a grim face looking out of it.

The face was that of the Major's wife at Ekeby, and the young Countess knew that all her pleasure was spoiled for that evening.

It is possible to be joyous when you don't know sorrow and only hear it mentioned as a guest in another country. It is more difficult to keep the heart gay when you stand face to face with dark, cruel trouble.

The Countess knew that the high sheriff had arrested the Major's wife, and that she was to be tried for what had taken place at Ekeby on the night of the ball there; but she had never dreamed that she would be kept in the official residence, so near them that they could see her room, so near

that she could hear the dance music and the sound of their voices. And the thought of the Major's wife took all the Countess's pleasure away.

Of course she danced both waltz and quadrille, minuet and anglaise, but between the dances she crept to the window and looked across the court-yard to the side wing. There was a light in the room there, and she could see Margarita Samzelius pacing backward and forward. She seemed never to rest, but to walk to and fro unceasingly.

The Countess found no pleasure in dancing, she was thinking all the time of the Major's wife pacing restlessly up and down her prison like a caged beast. She wondered how the others could dance; there were many there who must be quite as touched at the knowledge of their old friend being so near them as she was, but none of them showed a trace of it. The Värmlanders are a reserved people.

After each glance through the window, her feet grew heavier and the laugh caught in her throat. Schärling's wife saw her at last, as she brushed the vapor from the window-pane and tried to look out, and came and whispered to her, "Such a misfortune! Oh, dear, it is such a misfortune!"

"I feel it nearly impossible to dance to-night," whispered the Countess.

"It is against my wish we have a ball at all while she is imprisoned here," answered Fru Schärling. "She has been in Karlstad since she was arrested.

She is to be tried very soon, and they brought her here to-day. We could not put her into the wretched jail at the courthouse, so she was given the weaving-room in the side wing. She would have been in my drawing-room, Countess, if all these people had n't come to-day. You know her so slightly, but she has been like a mother and queen to us all. What will she think of us dancing here while she is in such trouble? It is a mercy that only a few know she is here."

"She ought never to have been arrested," said the Countess, sternly.

"That is true, but there was no other way, unless worse were to happen. There is no one who would deny her right to setting her own strawstacks on fire and turning the cavaliers out of Ekeby, but the Major is hunting the country for her. God alone knows what he might have done if she had n't been arrested! Schärling has had much unpleasantness for arresting her. Even in Karlstad they were angry that he had not looked through his fingers at the doings at Ekeby, but he did what he thought was best."

"But will she be condemned now?" asked the Countess.

"Oh, no, Countess, she won't. The Lady of Ekeby will never be found guilty, but I am afraid it will all be too much for her. She will go mad. You can imagine such a proud woman cannot bear being

treated like a criminal. I think it would have been wisest to have let her alone; she would have escaped him in her own way."

"Let her out," said the Countess.

"That can be done by others rather than the sheriff and his wife," whispered Fru Schärling. "We must guard her—especially to-night, when so many of her friends are here. Two men keep watch at her door, and it is barred so that no one can get at her. But if some one got her away, both Schärling and I should be so glad."

"Could I see her?" asked the young Countess.

Fru Schärling caught her hand eagerly and led her out. They threw shawls over their shoulders, and then crossed the courtyard.

"It is very possible she won't speak to us," said the sheriff's wife; "but she will see, at least, that we have not forgotten her."

They entered the first room in the wing, where the two men sat at the barred doors, and they were allowed entrance into the further room. It was a large chamber full of looms and other work instruments. It was commonly used as a weaving-shed, but it had a barred window and a strong lock on the door, and could, in case of necessity, be used as a jail.

The Major's wife continued her tramp up and down without paying any attention to them.

She was on a long journey. She remembered noth-

ing but that she was on her way to her mother, who was waiting for her in the Älfdal forests. She had no time to rest; she must cross the hundred and forty miles that separated them; she must go on, and quickly, for her mother was over ninety years old, and she would be dead soon. She had measured out the floor into ells, and then counted up the ells into fathoms, and the fathoms into half-miles and miles.

The way seems long and weary to her, and yet she dare not rest. She wades through deep snow-drifts; she hears the murmur of the everlasting forests as she walks onward. She takes her mid-day and evening meal, and rests in the huts of the Finns and the charcoal-burner's shanty. Sometimes, where there is no human habitation for many, many miles, she is obliged to gather branches and make a bed for herself at the root of an overturned pine.

And at last she reaches her destination — the long miles are all behind her, the forest opens out, and a red house stands in a snow-covered yard. The Klarälfven rushes along in a series of small rapids, and by the well-remembered thunder of its waters she realizes she is at home.

And her mother, who sees her coming like a beggar as she desired, comes to meet her.

When the Major's wife reached this point, she always looked up, glanced about her, saw the barred door, and remembered where she was.

Then she wondered if she was not going mad, and sat down to rest and think. But after a time she was again on the march, counting the ells and fathoms into miles, taking a short rest at the huts along the way, and sleeping neither day nor night till she had gone over the hundred and forty miles again.

During the time of her imprisonment she had hardly ever slept, and the two women who had come to see her gazed at her anxiously. The young Countess ever afterwards remembered her as she looked then. She often dreamed of her, and woke with tears in her eyes and a cry on her lips.

The old lady was so broken down; her hair was so thin, and loose ends streamed from the thin plait. Her face looked weak and hollow, her clothes were disordered and ragged, but she had still enough of the old imperiousness of the powerful Lady Bountiful about her so that she did not only inspire pity, but also respect.

But the young Countess chiefly remembered her eyes—sunken, retrospective, the light of reason in them not yet destroyed, but ready to die out—with a fierce gleam in their depths, so that you feared she might attack you with biting teeth and with clawing hands.

They had stood watching her for some time, when the Major's wife paused before the young Countess and looked at her severely. The Countess took a step backward, and clutched Fru Schärling's arm.

The old woman's face suddenly awoke to life and gained expression, and her eyes looked out upon the world with understanding. "Oh, no! oh, no!" she said, and smiled; "it is n't as bad as all that, my young lady."

She directed them to sit down, and seated herself with the air of stateliness belonging to the old days—to the great assemblies at Ekeby and the state balls at the Governor's residence at Karlstad. They forgot the rags and the prison, and saw again the proudest and richest woman in Värmland.

"My dear Countess," she asked, "what could have induced you to leave the dancing and visit a lonely old woman like me? You must be very good."

Countess Elizabeth could not answer. Her voice shook too much, and Fru Schärling answered for her that she could not dance while thinking of the Major's wife.

"Dear Fru Schärling," she said, "has it gone so far with me that I spoil the young people's pleasure? You must not cry for my sake, my dear little Countess," she continued. "I 'm a wicked old woman who deserve my fate. You don't think it right to strike your mother?"

"No, but—"

The Major's wife interrupted her, smoothing the fair curly hair over her forehead. "Child, child," she said, "how could you marry that stupid Henrik Dohna?"

"But I love him!"

"I see how it is, I see how it is—a good child and nothing more, crying with those that weep, and laughing with those that rejoice, and obliged to say 'Yes' to the first man who says 'I love you.' Yes, yes. Now go in and dance, my dear Countess, dance and be gay. There is no ill in you."

"But I want to do something for you!"

"Child," she answered, with dignity, "there lived an old woman at Ekeby, who held the winds of heaven in her hand. Now she is imprisoned and the winds are free. Is it wonderful that a great storm rages through the land?

"I am old, and I've seen it before. I know it, I know that God's fearful storm is upon us. Sometimes it sweeps over the great nations, sometimes over small forgotten communities. God's storm forgets no one: it overwhelms the great and the small. It is wonderful to see its approach.

"Oh, blessed storm of the Lord, blow over the earth! Voices in the air, voices in the water, sound and terrify! Make God's storm thunder, and make it fearful. May its stormy gusts sweep over the earth, beating against shaking walls, breaking the rusty locks and the houses that are falling to ruin.

"Terror shall spread over the country. The little birds' nests shall fall from their hold in the pine trees, and the hawk's nest shall fall from the fir-top with a great noise, and even into the owl's nest on

the mountain ledge shall the wind hiss with its dragon tongues.

"We thought all was well here among us, but it was not. God's storm was needed. I understand, and I do not complain. I only wish to go at once to my mother."

She seemed to sink together suddenly.

"Go now, young woman," she commanded. "I have no more time; I must go at once. Go now, and beware of those who ride on the storm clouds!"

And she returned to her restless walk. Her features lost their firmness, her eyes grew vacant. The Countess and Fru Schärling left her.

As soon as they were again among the dancers, the Countess went straight to Gösta Berling.

"I bring you a greeting from the Major's wife, Herr Berling," she said. "She expects you to help her out of prison."

"Then she must continue to expect it, Countess."

"Oh, help her, Herr Berling!"

Gösta gazed sternly before him. "No," he replied; "why should I help her? What have I to thank her for? All she has done for me has been my ruin."

"But, Herr Berling—"

"If she had not existed," he said passionately, "I should now be sleeping in the everlasting forest. Must I feel it necessary to risk my life for her, because she made me an Ekeby cavalier? Do you

think, Countess, there is any renown to be gained in that capacity?"

She turned from him without answering, she was so angry, and went to her place, thinking bitterly of the cavaliers. They are all there to-night with their horns and violins, and they intend to let the bows fly over the strings till they wear out, and without giving a thought to the fact that the gay music must penetrate to the prisoner's miserable room. They have come there to dance till their shoes go to dust, and they never think that their old benefactress can see their shadows swing by on the dimmed window-panes.

Oh, how ugly and grey the world had become! What a shadow trouble and harshness were casting over her soul!

A little later, Gösta Berling came and asked her to dance.

She refused shortly.

"The young Countess will not dance with me?" he asked, flushing hotly.

"Neither with you nor any of the Ekeby cavaliers," she answered.

"We are then not considered worthy of the honor?"

"It is no honor, Herr Berling; but I find no pleasure in dancing with those who have forgotten all the precepts of gratitude."

Gösta had already swung round on his heel.

The scene had been witnessed by many, and every one thought the Countess right. The ingratitude and heartlessness of the cavaliers had awakened universal disapproval.

But in those days Gösta Berling was more dangerous to cross than a wild beast of the forest. Ever since he came home from bear-hunting and found Marienne had left Ekeby, his heart was like an open sore. He had an aching desire to injure some one—any one—to spread sorrow and misery around him.

"If she desires it, she shall have it," he said to himself; "but she must not spare her own skin. The Countess likes elopements, she shall have more than she likes of them." He had nothing against an adventure. For eight days he had sorrowed for a woman's sake. It was enough. He called up Beerencreutz, the Colonel, and Kristian Bergh, the Strong Captain, and trusty Cousin Kristoffer, who never hesitated at a mad adventure, and held counsel with them how best to revenge the damaged honor of the cavaliers.

. . . .

Soon after this the ball came to an end. A long line of sledges drove up to the door. The gentlemen put on their fur coats, the ladies sought their wraps in the deepest confusion of the dressing-room.

The young Countess hastened to leave that hateful ball, and was ready first. She stood in the mid-

dle of the room, smiling at the excitement round her, when the door was thrown open and Gösta Berling crossed the threshold.

No man had the right to enter that room. The old ladies had their heads uncovered after putting away their splendid caps, and the younger ladies had tucked up their skirts so that their frills might not get crushed on the homeward drive.

But without paying attention to arresting cries, Gösta Berling strode forward to the Countess, lifted her in his arms, and rushed out of the room into the hall and out upon the doorsteps with her.

The cries of the astonished women did not stop him, and when they reached the hall door, they saw him throw himself into a sledge with the Countess still in his arms.

They heard the driver crack his whip and saw the horse spring forward. They recognized the driver —it was Beerencreutz, the horse was Don Juan —and with fear in their hearts for the fate of the Countess, they called to their husbands.

The men lost no time in questions, but dashed to the sledges, and with the Count at their head, they started after the runaways.

Meanwhile Gösta Berling sat in the sledge, holding the young Countess securely. He had forgotten all his sorrows, and, wild with the maddening spirit of adventure, he sang a song of love and roses.

He held her pressed closely to him, but she made

no attempt to escape. Her face lay, white and stony, on his breast.

What shall a man do when a pale, helpless face lies so near him, when he sees the fair hair swept aside, which usually shadows the shining brow, and the eyelids lie heavily over the gleam of smiling grey eyes? What shall a man do when red lips whiten under the gaze of his eyes?

Why, kiss them, of course—kiss the pale lips, the closed eyes, and white brows.

But at that the young Countess awoke. She threw herself aside. She was like a steel wand, and he was obliged to exert all his strength to prevent her from throwing herself out, till he forced her at last, conquered and trembling, into a corner of the sledge.

"See," he said, quite calmly to Beerencreutz, "the Countess is the third that Don Juan and I have carried away this winter; but the other two hung round my neck with kisses, and she will neither be kissed by me nor dance with me. Can you understand these women, Beerencreutz?"

When Gösta had left the courtyard, while the women were screaming and the men cursing, when the sleigh-bells rang, and the whips cracked, and all was shouting and confusion, the men who were guarding the Major's wife grew frightened.

"What is the matter?" they thought. "Why do they shout so?"

Suddenly the door was thrown open, and a voice cried to them, "She is gone. He has carried her off!"

Out they flew, running like madmen, without finding out if it was the Major's wife or some one else who had been carried away. They had good luck too, and managed to climb into a passing sledge, and it was a long time before they learned whom they were trying to overtake.

But Bergh and Cousin Kristoffer marched calmly to the door of the improvised jail, broke the lock, and opened it for the Major's wife.

"The Lady of Ekeby is free," they said.

She came out. They stood as straight as nine-pins on each side of the door, but did not meet her eyes.

"Your horse and sledge await you downstairs."

She went down, seated herself, and drove away. No one followed her, and no one knew whither she went.

Down Broby Hill, toward the ice-bound Löfven, Don Juan rushed. The proud racer flew over the snow; the frosty air whistled in the faces of the drivers; the sleigh-bells rang out; the moon and stars glittered, and the snow lay blue and white, shining with its own splendor.

Gösta felt his poetic fancy awakened. "Beerencreutz," he cried, "this is life. As Don Juan carries away the young women, so Time carries away the

individual. You are Necessity steering the course. I am Desire which tames the will, and so she is carried helpless, ever deeper and deeper downward."

"Don't talk nonsense," growled Beerencreutz; "they are after us,"—and a whistling cut of the whip urged Don Juan to still greater speed.

"There are the wolves, here is the booty," cried Gösta. "Don Juan, my boy, imagine yourself a young elk. Break your way through the ensnaring bushes, wade through the marsh. Leap from the crest of the hill range into the clear lake, swim over with proudly lifted head, and vanish, vanish into the dense darkness of the firwood. Run, Don Juan, run like a young elk!"

Joy filled his wild heart at the speed. The shouts of his pursuers were songs of exultation. Joy filled his wild heart when he felt the Countess shake with fear, and heard her teeth chattering.

Suddenly he loosened the iron grasp in which he had held her. He stood upright in the sledge, and swung his cap.

"I am Gösta Berling," he shouted, "the lord of ten thousand kisses and thirteen thousand love-letters. Hurrah for Gösta Berling! Catch him who can!"

And the next moment he was whispering to the Countess, "Is n't the speed fine? Is n't our drive royal? Beyond Löfven lies Vänern, beyond Vänern lies the sea—endless stretches of clear, blue-black

ice, and beyond it all a shining world. Rolling thunder in the freezing ice, shrill shouts behind us, shooting stars in the heavens, and ringing sleigh-bells before us! Forward—forever forward! Now, do you wish to make trial of such a journey, Countess?"

He had freed her, and she pushed him aside violently.

The next moment found him on his knees at her feet.

"I am a wretch, a miserable wretch. You should not have angered me. You stood there so proud and pure, and never dreamed that a cavalier's fist could reach you. You are loved by heaven and earth; you should not increase the burden of those whom heaven and earth despise."

He snatched her hands, and pressed them to his face.

"If you but knew," he pleaded, "what it meant to know yourself an outcast! You don't care what you do—you never care."

Just then he noticed that her hands were uncovered. He drew a pair of large fur gloves out of his pockets, and put them on for her.

And with that he became quite calm. He seated himself in the sledge as far as possible from the Countess.

"It is n't worth while being frightened, Countess," he said. "Don't you see where we are driv-

ing to? You can surely understand that we never intended to do you any harm!"

She had been nearly out of her senses with fear, and only noticed now that they had crossed the river, and Don Juan was drawing them up the steep hill to Borg.

They pulled up before the steps, and allowed the Countess to alight at her own door; but as soon as she was surrounded by protecting servants, she regained her courage and presence of mind.

"Take charge of the horse," she commanded the coachman. "These gentlemen who have driven me home will surely come in for a few moments. The Count will be here directly."

"As the Countess desires," replied Gösta, and stepped immediately out of the sledge, and Beerencreutz, too, threw the reins aside without a moment's hesitation. But the young Countess preceded them, and showed them, with hardly concealed exultation, into the salon.

She had probably expected they would hesitate to accept her proposal to await her husband's return. Of course, they could not know what a stern and just man he was. They did not seem to fear the judgment he would mete out to them for having so violently laid hold of her and compelled her to take that drive. She wished to hear him forbid them ever to set foot in her house again.

She wanted to see him call in the servants and

point out the cavaliers as men who were never again to be admitted within the doors of Borg. She wished to hear him express his scorn, not only for the way they had treated her, but also for their ingratitude toward the Major's wife, their benefactress.

Yes, he, who to her was all tenderness and consideration, would rise in just wrath against her captors. Love would lend fire to his words. He who protected and cared for her as for a being of another world, he would never allow rough men to descend upon her like hawks upon a sparrow. The little woman glowed from head to foot with the desire for revenge. Her husband would help her in her helplessness and drive away all the dark shadows.

But Beerencreutz, the Colonel, with the thick white moustache, strode unconcernedly into the dining-room and walked up to the fire, which was always burning there when the Countess was expected home from a ball.

Gösta remained in the darkness near the door, and silently watched the Countess while the servants relieved her of her outer garments. As he sat looking at her, he rejoiced as he had not done for many years. It was so clear to him — as certain as if it had been revealed to him — that within her dwelt the most beautiful soul. It lay bound and sleeping yet, but it would awaken. He rejoiced greatly at having discovered all the purity and the goodness and the innocence that lay hidden within her. He

could almost have laughed at her standing there looking so angry, with burning cheeks and frowning eyebrows.

"You don't know how good and sweet you are," he thought. That side of her character which inclined toward the world of the senses would never do her real self justice. But from that hour, Gösta Berling was compelled to be her servant, as one serves all that is beautiful and godly. Yes, it was no good regretting that he had treated her so roughly. If she had not been so frightened, if she had not pushed him aside so wildly, if he had not felt that all her being was shuddering at his coarseness, he would never have known, never have guessed, what a noble and sensitive spirit dwelt within her.

He never had believed it before. She had only cared for dancing and amusement, and she had found it possible to marry that stupid Count Henrik.

Yes, now he would be her slave till death—"dog and slave," as Captain Kristian used to say, "and nothing more."

Gösta Berling sat near the door with folded hands, and held a kind of adoration service. Since the day he had felt the fire of inspiration touch him, he had never experienced such blessedness in his soul. Though Count Henrik came into the room with a crowd of men, all swearing and lamenting over the cavaliers' many pranks, it did not distract him. He let Beerencreutz meet the storm, and he, the

man of many adventures, stood calmly at the fire-place with his foot on the bars and his elbow on his knee, and gazed at the storming crowd.

"What is the meaning of this?" the little Count screamed.

"It means," Beerencreutz replied, "that as long as there remains womankind on earth, there will always be fools to dance to their piping!"

The young Count grew very red in the face.

"I ask what this means!" he repeated.

"I also ask," mocked Beerencreutz, "I ask what it means when Henrik Dohna's Countess refuses to dance with Gösta Berling!"

The Count turned questioningly to his wife.

"I could not, Henrik," she cried; "I could not dance with him or any of them. I thought of the Major's wife whom they were allowing to die in prison."

The little Count straightened his stiff body and stretched out his old-fashioned head.

"We cavaliers," continued Beerencreutz, "allow no one to insult us. She that will not dance with us must drive with us. The Countess has received no harm, and that can be the end of the matter."

"No," said the Count, "that can't end the matter. I am answerable for my wife's doings. I desire to know why Gösta Berling did not apply to me when my wife insulted him."

Beerencreutz smiled.

"I desire to know," repeated the Count.

"One does not ask leave of the fox to take his skin," said Beerencreutz.

The Count laid his hand on his narrow chest.

"I have the reputation of being a just man," he cried. "I judge my servants, why cannot I judge my wife? You cavaliers have no right to judge her. The punishment you meted out to her, I put aside. It has never taken place, gentlemen, it has never taken place."

Count Henrik shrieked out the words in the highest falsetto. Beerencreutz sent a rapid glance over the company. There was not one of them—Sintram and Daniel Bendix and Dahlberg, and whoever they all were who had followed them in—who was not grinning at the way he was outwitting the stupid young Count.

The Countess did not understand at first. What was it that had never taken place? Her fear, the hard grip of the cavaliers' hands upon her, the wild songs, the wild words and kisses, were they all to be brushed aside? Was there nothing in this evening's events that was not influenced by the grey goddess of twilight?

"But, Henrik—"

"Silence!" he said, straightening himself to pass sentence upon her! "Woe to you, a woman, who have wished to be a judge over men. Woe to you, my wife, who have dared to insult a man whose hand

I press in friendship! What affair is it of yours that the cavaliers put the Major's wife in prison? Have they not the right? You can never know how a man is angered to the depths of his soul when he hears of a woman's infidelity. Are you also going to tread the downward path, that you take her part?"

"But, Henrik—"

She cried out like a child, and stretched out her arms as if to ward off the cruel words. Probably she had never heard such anger directed against herself. She was so helpless among all those hard men; and now her only defender turned against her. Her heart would never again have strength to illumine the world.

"But, Henrik, it is you who should defend me!"

Gösta Berling was attentive now, when it was too late. He did n't in the least know what to do. He wished her well, but he dared not thrust himself between husband and wife.

"Where is Gösta Berling?" asked the Count.

"Here," replied Gösta, and he made a well-meant attempt to laugh the matter aside; "the Count was probably on the point of making a speech, and I fell asleep. What do you say to our going home now and leaving you to get to bed?"

"Gösta Berling, as my wife refused to dance with you, I command her to beg your pardon and to kiss your hand."

"My dear Count Henrik," said Gösta, smilingly,

"my hand is n't suitable for any young lady to kiss. Yesterday it was red from the blood of an elk; to-night it was black with soot after a fight with a coal-heaver. The Count has passed a noble and high-minded sentence—that is sufficient. Come, Beerencreutz."

The Count placed himself in his way.

"Stay," he said, "my wife must obey. I desire her to know what it is to act on her own responsibility."

Gösta looked helpless. The Countess was quite pale, but she did not move.

"Go!" said the Count.

"Henrik—I can't."

"You can," he answered, sternly; "you can, but I know what you want. You want to force me to fight the man, because you are capricious and don't like him. Well, if you won't give him satisfaction, I must. You women are always delighted when men are killed for your sake. You are in fault, but you will not make amends for it. I must therefore do it. I am obliged to fight a duel, my Countess, and in a few hours I shall be a bloody corpse."

She gave him a long look, and she saw him as he was, stupid, cowardly, inflated with pride and vanity, the most pitiable of men.

"Calm yourself," she said, and she was now cold as ice; "I will do it."

But now Gösta Berling seemed out of his mind.

"Countess, you shall not, never, never! You are

only a child, a weak, innocent child, and *you*—to kiss my hand! You have such a white and pure soul. I will never again come near you, never again! I bring death and desolation and destruction over all the good and innocent. You shall not touch me! I shrink from you as fire from water, you shall not touch me!"

He put his hands behind his back.

"It is nothing to me now, Herr Berling. It is nothing at all now. I beg your pardon, and I beg you to let me kiss your hand!"

Gösta still kept his hands behind his back. He considered the situation and moved nearer the door.

"If you will not receive the satisfaction my wife offers you, I must fight you, Gösta Berling, and I must also deal to her another and severer punishment."

The Countess shrugged her shoulders. "He is crazy with fear," she whispered; "let me do as he commands. What does it matter if I am humiliated? It is what you wished from the first."

"Did I wish it? Do you believe I wished *that?* Well, if I have no hands to kiss, you must then believe I never meant it," he cried.

He sprang to the fire and plunged his hands in. The flames wrapped round them, the skin crinkled, the nails cracked, but Beerencreutz caught him by the back of the neck at the same moment and flung him out upon the floor. He stumbled against a chair and remained sitting. He was almost ashamed now

of doing such a thing. Would she think he had done it for effect? To do it before a roomful of people must seem as if it were done for effect. There had n't been the least danger in it.

Before he could think of rising, the Countess was on her knees beside him. She caught hold of the reddened, sooted hands, and looked at them.

"I will kiss them—kiss them," she cried, "as soon as they are not too tender and painful." And the tears poured from her eyes as she saw the blisters rising under the burned skin.

Thus he became to her the realization of an unknown nobility. That such things could still happen in the world! That it had been done for her sake! What a man he was, able to do all, as mighty in good as in evil, a man of great achievements, a man of strong words and brilliant deeds! A hero, a hero! Created different, of different clay from other men! The slave of a caprice, of the desire of a moment, wild and fearful, but the possessor of a furious strength, fearing nothing.

She had been so oppressed all the evening, and had seen only sorrow and cruelty and cowardliness about her. Now all was forgotten. The Countess was again happy in living. The goddess of twilight had been conquered, and light and color again clothed the world.

. . . .

On the same night the cavaliers were shouting and

swearing in the cavaliers' wing at Gösta Berling. The old gentlemen wished to go to sleep, but it was impossible. He gave them no peace. It was in vain they put out the lights and drew their bed-curtains; he continued talking.

He told them first what an angel the young Countess was, and how much he worshipped her. He would serve and adore her. He was happy in the knowledge that every one had forsaken him. He would now devote his life to her service. She scorned him, naturally, but he would be content to lie at her feet like a dog.

Had they ever noticed Low Island in the Löfven? Had they seen it from the south, where the rugged cliff raised itself abruptly from the water? Had they seen it from the north, where it sank into the lake in gentle slope, and where the narrow sandbanks, covered with tall, beautiful pines, wound out into the shallow water and formed lovely little lakes? There, on the precipitous height where the remains of an old castle were still standing, he would build a palace for the young Countess—a marble palace. Wide stairs would be hewn in the rock leading down to the lake, where gaily flagged boats would land. There would be shining halls and high towers with gilded pinnacles. It would be a suitable home for the young Countess. That old wooden hovel at Borg Point was not worthy she should set her foot in it.

When he had gone on like this for some time, a snore now and then penetrated the yellow-striped curtains, but most of the cavaliers swore and railed over him and his mad ideas.

"Fellow-men," he continued, solemnly, "I see God's world covered with men's handiwork or remains of their handiwork. The pyramids weigh down the earth, the Tower of Babel pierces the sky, beautiful temples and grey castles have been raised from the dust. But of all that has been built by hands, what has not fallen to ruin or will fall? Oh, fellow-men, throw aside the bricklayer's trowel and mortar-board! Spread your apron over your head and lie down and build fair dream castles! What has the spirit to do with temples of clay and stone? Learn to build everlasting castles of dreams and visions!"

And thereupon he went off laughing to bed.

When soon afterwards the Countess heard that the Major's wife had been set at liberty by the cavaliers, she gave a dinner party in their honor, and her long friendship with Gösta Berling dated from that time.

Ghost Stories

OH, children of a later day! I have nothing new to tell you; nothing but what is old and almost forgotten. Tales from the nursery, where the children sit on low stools round the white-haired story-teller, tales from the workmen's kitchen, where the farm laborers and crofters gather about the pine-wood fire. From the leather sheaths hanging round their necks they draw their knives and butter themselves thick slices of soft bread, as they sit about and chat, while the steam rises in clouds from their wet clothing. And I have tales from the sitting-room, where old gentlemen sit in their rocking-chairs and, inspired by a glass of steaming toddy, talk of the days that are past and gone.

And listening to these stories, a child, standing at the window on a wintry night, would see, instead of the clouds, cavaliers sweep over the sky in their light shays; to her the stars were waxen lights shining from the old mansion on Borg Point, and the spinning-wheel which hummed in the next room was turned by old Ulrika Dillner, for the child's head was full of these men and women of the olden days, and she lived and dreamed among them.

And if you send her, whose whole soul is filled with those old stories, through the dark garret to the pantry beyond, to fetch flax or some crackers,

what a rush of little feet, what a hurried dash is made down the stairs, over the entry, and into the kitchen! For in the dark upstairs, she has remembered the stories told of the wicked Sintram, the owner of the iron works at Fors, he who was in league with the devil.

The bones of Sintram are at rest long years ago in Svartsjö churchyard, but no one believes his soul is with God, as is written on his tombstone.

As long as he lived, he was one of those men to whose house on long, rainy Sunday afternoons there came a heavy calash drawn by four black horses. A darkly clad, elegant gentleman descended and went in to help the master of the house while away with cards and dice the dreary monotony of the hours which were his despair. Those card parties were kept up till after midnight, and when the stranger drove away at dawn, he always left behind him some gift which carried misfortune with it.

Yes, as long as Sintram lived, he was one of those whose coming was heralded by unseen powers. One of those whose shade went before them, their carriages rolled into your courtyard, whips cracked, their voices were heard on the steps, the hall door opened and shut, the dogs were roused at the loud noise they made, and yet there was no one, nothing to be seen, it was only the apparition which always preceded them.

Ugh, those fearful people whom the wicked spir-

its seek! What was that big black hound seen at Fors in Sintram's time? It had awful gleaming teeth and a long tongue, dripping with blood, hanging out of its panting mouth! Once when the farm men were in the kitchen having dinner, it came and scratched at the kitchen door. All the servant girls screamed with fright, but one of the biggest and strongest of the men caught up a burning log from the hearth, opened the door, and thrust it down the dog's throat.

It had rushed away, howling horribly, flames and smoke pouring out of its mouth; sparks whirled about it, and its footsteps on the road shone like fire.

And was it not awful, too, that although Sintram drove away upon his journeys with his black horses, horses never brought him home again. When he returned at night, black bulls drew his carriage. People living by the roadside saw their long black horns outlined against the sky, heard their bellowing, and were terrified at the shower of sparks struck out by their hoofs and the carriage wheels on the dry gravel.

Yes, there was ample cause for the scurrying of small feet over the wide floors of the garret. Imagine if something dreadful, if he whose name it was best not to mention were to come out of the dark corner! You could not feel sure he would not do it. It was not only to the wicked he showed himself.

Had not Ulrika Dillner seen him? Yes, both she and Anna Stjärnhök could tell you about it.

. . . .

Friends, children of men! You who dance and you who laugh, I pray you that you dance carefully and laugh kindly, for much sorrow may come to pass if your thin-soled, silken shoe treads upon a tender human heart instead of the hard floor planks, and your gay, silver-ringing laugh may drive a soul to despair.

It must have been that the young people had trampled too hard upon old Ulrika Dillner; their laughter must have sounded too overbearing in her ears, for suddenly there came over her a great and irresistible longing for the title and dignity belonging to a married woman. She said "Yes" to Sintram's long courtship, married him, and took her place at Fors as his wife, leaving her old friends at Berga, the old work she was accustomed to, and the old struggle for daily bread.

It was a hastily arranged wedding; Sintram proposed at Christmas, and they were married in February. Anna Stjärnhök was to spend the winter with the Ugglas and more than filled Ulrika's place, thus leaving her free to go forth and win for herself the title of Fru.

Her conscience had nothing to reproach her with, yet she regretted the step she had taken. It was

anything but a comfortable home she had come to; the big empty rooms were full of a mysterious terror. As soon as it grew dark, she began to be afraid and to shudder. She almost died of homesickness. The long Sunday afternoons were the worst—there seemed no end to them, nor to the train of painful thoughts which passed slowly through her mind.

And so it happened, one Sunday in March, when Sintram had not returned home after church, she went upstairs into the salon and sat down at her harpsichord. It was her only comfort. The old harpsichord, with a piper and shepherdess painted on its white cover, was her own property, inherited from her parents' home. She could tell it all her grief, and it would understand.

But isn't it both pitiful and ridiculous? Can you guess what she played? A polka—when she was in such great distress!

Oh, she knew nothing else. Before her fingers stiffened round the dusting switch and the carver, she had learned this one polka, and her fingers remembered it still. She knew no funeral march nor passionate sonata—not even a mournful folk-song—nothing but that polka.

And she played it whenever she had anything to confide to the old clavier; when she could have wept, and when she wished to laugh. She played it at her own wedding, when she came to her new home,

and she played it now. The old strings understood her well enough—she was wretched—wretched.

A passer-by, hearing the sound of the polka, might have thought that Sintram was giving a ball to his neighbors and friends—it was such an extraordinarily cheery and lively air. In the old days it rang gaiety in and hunger out of Berga, and all were ready to dance when it sounded. Rheumatic muscles burst their bonds, and its gay strains had tempted eighty-year-old cavaliers to try the polka. All the world would have danced to that polka, but old Ulrika wept.

She had surly, ill-tempered servants and savage animals around her; she longed for kind and smiling faces, and the polka must express her great longing.

People found it difficult to remember that she was Fru Sintram. They still called her Mamsell Dillner, and the polka expressed her sorrow over the vanity which had tempted her to run after the dignity accorded to a married woman.

She played as if she meant to break the strings of the harpsichord; there was so much she must drown in its tones—the cries of the ill-used peasantry, the curses of the crofters, the taunting laughter of defiant servants, and, worst of all, the shame—the shame of being a bad man's wife.

To that same tune Gösta Berling had led out young Countess Dohna to the dance, Marienne Sinclaire and her many admirers had danced to it, and

even the Lady of Ekeby had kept time to it in the days when handsome Altringer lived. She saw them, couple after couple, united by youth and beauty, as they whirled before her, and a stream of gaiety passed from her to them and back to her. It was her polka which made their cheeks burn and their eyes shine like that. She was far from it all now, but the polka still rang out; there were so many happy memories to drown!

She played, too, to deaden her fear. Her heart grew faint with fright when she saw the black hound, or heard the servants whisper about the black bulls—and she played the polka, over and over again, to deaden that fear.

Presently she noticed that her husband had returned. She heard him come into the room and sit down in the rocking-chair. She recognized his way of rocking and the noise made by the rockers scraping against the deal floor so well that she did not turn toward him.

And still, as she played, the rocking continued till it drowned all the sounds of her polka.

Poor old Ulrika, so wearied, so helpless and lonely, alone in the enemies' country, without a friend to complain to, with no better companion than an old harpsichord which answered her grief with a polka!

It was like a laugh at a funeral or a drinking song in church. And while the chair still rocked

behind her, it suddenly seemed to her that her harpsichord was laughing at her, and she stopped abruptly in the middle of a bar. She got up and glanced behind her. A moment later she was lying unconscious on the floor. It was not her husband sitting there—but another—he whose name it is best for children not to mention, who would frighten them to death if they met him in the dark garret.

. . . .

Ah, if your soul has been satiated with such stories as these, is it possible to free yourself from their power? To-night the wind is howling outside, and a fecus palm and a rosebush are beating their stiff leaves against the balcony pillars—the sky hangs darkly over the far-reaching hills, and I, sitting here, with my lamp lighted and my curtains drawn aside, I, already growing old and therefore bound to be sensible, still feel the same creepiness upon my spine as when I heard the story; I am compelled to raise my eyes from my work and glance round repeatedly to see that no one has stolen into the room and is hiding in that corner; I must glance into the balcony to be sure that no black head raises itself over the railing. This fear, fostered by the old ghost stories, never leaves me, and, when the nights are dark and I am alone, it grows so overwhelming that I must cast aside my pen, creep into bed, and draw the blankets over my head.

It was the great secret wonder of my childhood that Ulrika Dillner lived through that afternoon. I could not have done it.

It was fortunate that Anna Stjärnhök drove up to the house about that time! She found Ulrika lying on the floor in the salon and brought her back to consciousness. I should not have been so easy to bring back to life. I should have been dead.

I hope, dear friends, that you will never see the tears of the aged, and that you may never stand helpless when a grey head leans against your breast to find support, and old hands are clasped upon yours in silent prayer. May you never see the aged sink in sorrow which you cannot lighten. For what is the grief of youth? It has still strength and hope, but how terrible it is to see the old weep — what despair you feel when they, who have been the support of your young life, sink down in helpless misery.

Anna Stjärnhök sat and listened to old Ulrika, and she saw no way of helping her. The old woman cried and trembled, her eyes were wild — she rambled on and talked incoherently, almost as if she no longer remembered where she was. The thousand wrinkles which covered her face were twice as deep as usual, the false curls which hung round her face were uncurled and disordered by her tears, and the long, thin figure shook with sobs.

At last Anna felt she must put a stop to it. She had decided what she would do. She would take

Ulrika back to Berga. Although she was undoubtedly Sintram's wife, she could not remain at Fors. She would go mad if she remained with him. Anna decided to take her away.

How frightened and yet how delighted Ulrika was with this decision!

But oh, no, she certainly would not dare to leave her husband and her home. He might, perhaps, send the black dog after her.

But Anna conquered, partly by deception, partly by threats; and in half an hour she had her in the sledge beside her. Anna drove herself, and old Disa was in the shafts; the roads were bad, for it was late in March, but it did Ulrika good to be sitting again in the well-known sledge, behind the horse which had served Berga as faithfully and as long as she herself had done.

Being of a cheerful temperament and a dauntless mind, this old household drudge stopped crying by the time they passed Arvidstorp; at Högberg she was already laughing, while at Munkerud she was telling Anna her experiences in her youth with the Countess at Svaneholm.

They turned into the lonely deserted district beyond Munkeby. The road climbed every height it could possibly reach, it crept to the top in lengthy curves, leaped down in steep descent, and then rushed as rapidly as possible over the level valley to climb the nearest height again.

They were just about to drive down the hill at Vestratorp when old Ulrika paused suddenly in her talk and caught Anna by the arm. She was staring at a big black dog on the roadside.

"Look!" she cried.

The dog turned and set off into the woods. Anna did not see him very clearly.

"Drive!" cried Ulrika; "drive as quickly as you can. Sintram will hear directly that I am gone."

Anna tried to laugh her out of her fancy, but it was impossible.

"We shall hear his sleigh-bells directly, you 'll see. We shall hear them before we reach the top of the next hill."

And while old Disa took a breath on the top of Elofsbacke they heard sleigh-bells below them.

Old Ulrika grew quite wild with fear. She trembled, sobbed, and wailed as she had done in the salon at Fors. Anna tried to whip up old Disa, but the horse only turned its head and gave her a look of the profoundest astonishment. Did she imagine old Disa did not know the right time to trot and when to walk? Was she going to teach her to pull the sledge, teach *her*, who knew every stone, every bridge and gate, and every hillock on the road for the last twenty years?

And the sleigh-bells sounded nearer.

"It is he—it is he—I know his bells," wailed Ulrika.

The sound still approached. Sometimes it seemed so loud that Anna turned her head, expecting to see the head of Sintram's horse just behind their sledge—sometimes it died away. Now they heard it on the right, now on the left of the road, but they saw no one. It seemed as though the sleigh-bells followed them.

And just as such bells rang in melodies, sang, talked, and answered when you returned at night from a ball, so they sang and talked and answered now. The whole forest echoed with their tune.

Anna Stjärnhök began to wish something would appear—to see Sintram and his red horse. That dreadful bell-ringing began to unnerve her.

She was not afraid, she had never been afraid, but those sleigh-bells distracted and tortured her.

"Those sleigh-bells torment me," she said at last, and immediately the words were caught up by the bells. "Torment me," they rang; "torment, torment, torment me," they sang in every possible tone.

It was not long since she had driven over this same road hunted by wolves. In the darkness she had seen white teeth glance in gaping mouths, she had expected her body to be torn to pieces by the savage brutes, but she had not been afraid. She had never lived through a more glorious night. Strong and beautiful the horse had been that carried her, strong and beautiful, too, was the man who had shared the joy of adventure with her.

Oh, this old horse and this helpless, trembling comrade! She felt herself so helpless, too, she could have wept. It was impossible to escape from that dreadful, irritating ringing.

She drew up and got out of the sledge. There must be an end to it; why should she flee, as if she were afraid of the wicked, contemptible wretch?

At last she saw a horse's head appear out of the gathering twilight, then a whole horse, a sledge, and in the sledge sat—Sintram.

She noticed, however, that it did not appear as if it had come along the road, this sledge with horse and master, but seemed as if it had been created under her eyes, and appeared just as it was finished.

Anna threw the reins to Ulrika and went to meet Sintram.

He pulled up his horse.

"See, see," he cried, "what exceptional luck I have! Dear Fröken Stjärnhök, may I hand over my companion into your sledge? He is going to Berga this evening, and I am in a hurry to be at home."

"Where is your companion?" asked Anna.

Sintram threw open the sledge cover, and showed Anna a man sleeping at the bottom of the sledge. "He is a little tipsy," he said, "but it won't matter. He is sure to sleep soundly. Any way he is an acquaintance of yours, Fröken Stjärnhök—it is Gösta Berling."

Anna started.

"Yes, I may say," continued Sintram, "that she who gives up her beloved sells him to the devil. That was the way I got into his claws. One thinks one is going to do so much good; sacrifice is a good thing, but love, that is evil."

"What do you mean? What are you talking about?" Anna asked, shaken with feeling.

"I mean that you shouldn't have let Gösta Berling give you up, Fröken Anna!"

"It was God's will—"

"Yes, yes, of course, to sacrifice one's self is right, to love is wrong. The good Lord does not like to see people happy. He sends wolves after them; but what if it wasn't God's doing, Fröken Anna? Suppose it was I who called my nice grey lambs from Dovrefjäll to chase that young man and woman? Suppose I sent them because I feared to lose one of my elect? Suppose it wasn't God who did it?"

"You must not tempt me to doubt on that point, Herr Sintram," said Anna, in a weak voice, "or I am lost."

"See here," said he, leaning over the sleeping man, "look at his little finger. That tiny cut never heals. The blood was drawn from there when he signed the contract. He is mine. There is a peculiar power in blood. He is mine—it is only love that can free him . . . but if I keep him, he will be a fine fellow."

Anna Stjärnhök fought against the enchantment

which seemed to be enveloping her. It was stupidity, rank stupidity, no one could sign away his soul to the devil; but she had no control over her thoughts, the twilight hung so heavily over her, the forest round about was so dark and quiet. She could not escape the hour's mysterious dread creeping over her.

"Perhaps you think," continued Sintram, "there is n't much to be destroyed in him? But there is. Has he ever ground down the peasants or deceived his poor friends or played falsely? Has he been the lover of married women?"

"I shall believe you are the devil himself, Herr Sintram!"

"Let us exchange, Fröken Anna—you take Gösta Berling, take him and marry him. Take him and give your friends at Berga money. I give him up to you—and, you know, he is mine. Remember it was n't God who sent the wolves after you that night, and let us exchange!"

"And what will you take in his place?"

Sintram grinned.

"I, what will I have? Oh, I shall be satisfied with little. I only ask for that old woman in your sledge, Fröken Anna."

"Satan—tempter," Anna cried, "leave me! Am I to fail an old friend who depends upon me? Am I to leave her to you, that you may drive her to madness?"

"See, see, be calm, Fröken Anna! Think it over! There is a fine young man and there an old worn-out woman. One of them I must have. Which shall it be?"

Anna Stjärnhök laughed despairingly.

"Do you think we can stand here and exchange souls as one exchanges horses at Broby market-place?"

"Yes, just so—but if you wish, Fröken Anna, we will arrange it in another way. We must remember the Stjärnhök honor."

And he suddenly began to call and shout to his wife, who was sitting alone some distance ahead in the other sledge, and to Anna's unspeakable horror, she obeyed him at once, stepped out of the sledge, and came trembling toward them.

"See, see," said Sintram, "what an obedient wife! Fröken Stjärnhök has nothing to do with it if she comes when her husband calls. Now I will lift Gösta out of my sledge and leave him here on the road. Leave him forever, Fröken Anna,—and who likes may take him up."

He bent down to take the sleeping figure, but Anna, bending down and looking directly into his eyes, hissed out like a tortured animal—

"In God's name, go home at once! Don't you know who is sitting in the rocking-chair and waiting for you? Dare you let that gentleman wait?"

It was to Anna almost the most terrible of that

day's dreadful occurrences to see the effect of those words. Sintram clutched at his reins, turned, and drove homeward, lashing the horse to wildness with his shouts and blows. Down the steep hillside they flew at a dangerous pace, while a line of sparks flashed under the sledge runners and the horse's hoofs on the rough March roads.

Anna Stjärnhök and old Ulrika stood alone on the road, but they had no word to say to each other. Ulrika trembled at the sight of Anna's wild eyes, and Anna had nothing to say to the poor creature for whose sake she had sacrificed her lover.

She longed to scream, to throw herself on the ground and strew the snow and sand upon her head.

She had known the beauty of sacrifice before, now she felt its bitterness. To sacrifice her love was nothing in comparison to offering up the soul of her lover!

They reached Berga in silence, but when they arrived and the sitting-room door opened, Anna Stjärnhök fainted for the first and last time in her life. There in the room sat Gösta Berling and Sintram, chatting in all good fellowship, the toddy glasses on the table. They must have been there quite an hour.

Anna Stjärnhök fainted, but old Ulrika stood calm. She had noted that all didn't seem quite right with their pursuer on the road.

Afterwards it was arranged between Captain

Uggla and Sintram that Ulrika should remain at Berga. He took it all very good-naturedly; he certainly did not wish her to go mad, he said.

. . . .

Oh, children of a later day!

I cannot demand that any one should believe these old stories. They may be nothing but lies and fancies, but the fear which rolls over the human heart, till it wails like the floor planks under Sintram's rocking-chair, the doubt which rings in your ears, as the sleigh-bells rang in Anna Stjärnhök's in the lonely forest, are they only lies and fancies?

Oh, if they only were!

Ebba Dohna's Story

BEWARE of the beautiful promontory on the east shore of the Löfven, of the proud promontory round which the bays curve in gentle waves, where Borg Hall stands. The Löfven is never so beautiful as seen from its crest. No one knows how lovely is this lake of my dreams, if from Borg promontory he has not watched the morning mists glide away from its gleaming surface, and from the window of the little blue cabinet where so many memories live seen it reflect a rosy sunset.

But I still say—beware of going thither.

For you may be tempted to remain in the sorrow-laden halls of the old estate; you will perhaps become the owner of this beautiful spot, and if you are young, rich, and happy, you may make your home here with a young bride, as many another has done.

No; better never to have seen the beautiful promontory, for happiness cannot dwell in Borg. Know that, however rich, however happy you may be, those old-fashioned floors will soon drink *your* tears; those walls, which have echoed so many sounds of sorrow, will also echo *your* sighs.

There lies an untoward fate over that beautiful estate. It seems as though sorrow were buried there, but could find no rest in its grave, and rose again to

terrify the living. If I were master at Borg, I would search the stony ground of the pine wood, and under the cellar floor of the mansion, and in the fertile earth of the surrounding fields, till I found the worm-eaten corpse of the witch, and I would give her a grave in consecrated ground at Svartsjö churchyard. And at her funeral there should be no lack of bell-ringers; the bells should peal loud and long over her; and I would give rich gifts to the priest and the sexton, that they might wed her to everlasting rest with redoubled vigor.

Or if this were ineffective, I would let fire encircle the bulging wooden walls some stormy night and let it destroy it all, so that no one could ever again be tempted to live in that unhappy house. And afterwards no one should enter upon that fated place, only the black daws from the church tower might found a colony in the tall chimney stack which raised itself black and awful over the charred ground.

Yet I should certainly be frightened to see the flames leap over the roof, to see thick smoke, reddened by the flare of the flames and flaked with sparks, pour forth from the old mansion. I should fancy I heard the wail of homeless memories in the roar and crackling of the flames, and saw homeless ghosts float in their blue points. I should remember how sorrow and unhappiness beautifies, and I should weep, feeling that a temple of the old gods had been doomed to destruction.

But silence, you who croak of misfortune! Wait till night, if you would hoot in concert with the forest owl. Borg still gleamed on the height of the promontory, protected by its park of mighty pine trees, and the snow-covered fields below glittered in the blinding sunlight of a March morning, and the glad laugh of the gay little Countess Elizabeth was heard within its walls.

On Sundays she used to go to Svartsjö church, which lay near Borg, and gather together some friends to dinner. The Judge from Munkerud and his family and the Ugglas from Berga, the curate and his wife and wicked Sintram usually came, and if Gösta Berling had come to Svartsjö over the ice of the Löfven, she invited him too. Why should she not invite Gösta Berling?

She probably did not know gossips already whispered that Gösta went to the east shore so often for the purpose of meeting the Countess. Perhaps he also went to sup and gamble with Sintram; but no one thought much of that, they all knew his body was like iron, but it was quite another thing with his heart. No one believed that he could see a pair of bright eyes and fair hair curling round a white forehead without falling in love.

The young Countess was very kind to him; but there was nothing exceptional in that, for she was kind to all. She seated ragged urchins on her knee; and when driving, if she passed any poor old wretch

on the wayside, she made the coachman pull up and took the wanderer into her sledge.

Gösta sat in the little blue cabinet, where you have the lovely view northward over the lake, and read poetry to her. There was no harm in it. He did not forget what she was. A Countess! and he was a homeless wanderer and adventurer; and it did him good to associate with some one who stood high and holy over him. He might as well think of falling in love with the Queen of Sheba, who decorated the front of the gallery in Svartsjö church, as with the Countess Dohna.

He only desired to serve her as a page serves his mistress — to be allowed to fasten on her skates, hold her wool skeins, or steer her coasting sledge. There could be no question of love between them, but he was the kind of man to find pleasure in a romantic, harmless sentiment.

The young Count was silent and serious, and Gösta was gaiety itself. He was just the companion the Countess desired. No one seeing her dreamed of her cherishing an unlawful passion. She cared only for dancing — dancing and gaiety. She would like the world to be quite level, without any stones or hills or lakes, so that you could dance over it all. She would like to dance all the way from her cradle to her grave in her narrow, thin-soled silken shoes.

But gossip is not very merciful toward young women.

When these guests dined at Borg, the gentlemen usually went after dinner into the Count's room to smoke and take a nap; the old ladies sank into the armchairs in the salon and leaned their worthy heads against the high-cushioned backs; but the Countess and Anna Stjärnhök went away into the blue cabinet and exchanged endless confidences.

And on the Sunday following the one on which Anna had taken old Ulrika Dillner back to Berga, they were sitting there again.

No one on earth was more wretched than Anna. All her gaiety was gone, as was the happy audacity with which she met every one and everything that threatened to touch her.

All that had taken place that day had sunk, in her consciousness, into the twilight from which it had emanated. She had not a single clear impression.

Yes, one—which poisoned her soul.

"If it was not God," she kept whispering to herself,—"if it was not God, who sent the wolves?"

She demanded a sign, a miracle. She searched the heavens and the earth, but she saw no hand stretched from the skies to point out her way. No cloud of smoke and fire went before her.

As she sat opposite the Countess in the little blue cabinet, her eyes fell upon a small bouquet of blue anemones which the Countess held in her white hand. Like lightning it flashed across her that she

knew where they had grown, that she knew who had plucked them.

There was no necessity to ask. Where in all the country did blue anemones grow in April but in the birchwood on the shore slope near Ekeby?

She gazed and gazed at the small blue stars — those happy flowers who win all hearts; those little prophets who, beautiful themselves, are glorified in the glamour of all that they foretell, of all the beautiful to come. And as she looked at them, anger began to shake her soul — anger which rumbled like thunder and streamed like lightning. "By what right," she thought, "does the Countess wear that bunch of anemones plucked on the shore road from Ekeby?"

They were all tempters — Sintram, the Countess, every one tried to tempt Gösta to evil ways; but she would defend him, she would defend him against them all. If it cost her her heart's blood, she would do it.

She felt she must see those flowers torn from the Countess's hand and cast aside, trampled, destroyed, before she left the little blue cabinet.

She felt this, and began a strife against the little blue stars. In the salon the old ladies leaned their heads against the backs of their armchairs, and suspected nothing; the old gentlemen puffed their pipes in peace and quietness in the Count's room — all was calm, only in the little blue cabinet raged

a fierce strife. Ah, they do well who can hold their hands from the sword, who can bear in patience, can quiet their hearts and let God guide their path! The uneasy heart is forever going astray; evil ever makes the evil worse.

But Anna Stjärnhök thought she had at last seen a sign.

"Anna," said the Countess, "tell me a story."

"What about?"

"Oh," said the Countess, caressing the bouquet with her white fingers, "don't you know something about love, something about loving?"

"No, I know nothing about loving."

"How you talk! Is n't there a place here called Ekeby, a place full of cavaliers?"

"Yes," said Anna, "there is a place here called Ekeby, and there are men who suck out the marrow of the country, who make us incapable of earnest work, who ruin the youth growing up around them, and lead our geniuses astray. Do you want to hear love stories about *them?*"

"Yes, I do—I like the cavaliers."

Then Anna spoke—spoke in short, curt sentences like an old hymn book, for she was nearly stifled by stormy feeling. Hidden passion trembled in every word, and the Countess, both frightened and interested, listened to her.

"What is the love and the faith of a cavalier? A sweetheart to-day, another to-morrow, one in the

east, one in the west. Nothing is too high for him, nothing too low; one day a count's daughter, the next a beggar girl. Nothing in the world is so roomy as his heart. But wretched, wretched is she who loves a cavalier! She must search for him while he lies drunk on the wayside. She must silently watch him laying waste the home of her children at the gambling-table. She must endure seeing him hanging about strange women. Oh, Elizabeth, if a cavalier begs a decent woman for a dance, she ought to refuse him; if he gives her flowers, she ought to throw them away and trample on them; if she loves him, she ought to die rather than marry him. Among the cavaliers was one who was a disgraced clergyman.... He was dismissed from his calling because he drank. He was drunk in church: he drank the sacramental wine. Have you heard of him?"

"No."

"After he was suspended, he ranged the country as a beggar. He drank like a madman. He would even steal to get gin."

"What is his name?"

"He is no longer at Ekeby. The Major's wife took him in hand, gave him clothes, and persuaded your mother-in-law, Countess Märta, to make him tutor to your husband, young Count Henrik."

"A discharged clergyman?"

"Oh, he was a young and strong man, and learned. There was nothing the matter with him as

long as he did not drink. And Countess Märta was not very particular. It amused her to tease the rector and curate. Still she ordered that no one was to speak of his past life to her children, for her son would have lost all respect for him, and her daughter could not have endured him, for she was a saint.

"So he came here to Borg. He always remained near the door, sat on the extreme edge of his chair, was silent at table, and disappeared into the park as soon as visitors arrived.

"But there, in the lonely paths, he used to meet Ebba Dohna. She was not of those who loved the noisy fêtes that stormed through the halls of Borg since Countess Märta had become a widow. She was not of those who sent daring glances out into the world. She was so shy and gentle. Even when she was seventeen, she was but a tender child, but she was very beautiful, with her brown eyes and the fair flush on her cheeks. Her thin, slim figure bent slightly forward. Her narrow little hand slipped into yours with a shy pressure. Her little mouth was the most silent of mouths, and the most serious. And her voice—her sweet, low voice, which pronounced the words so slowly and distinctly—never rang with any healthy youthfulness or warmth, but its tired tones sounded like a wearied musician's closing chords.

"She was not like other girls. Her feet trod the earth so lightly, so silently, as if she were but a

frightened visitant here; and her glances sank so as not to be disturbed in the view of glorious inner visions. Her soul had turned from earth while she was but a child.

"When a child, her grandmother used to tell her stories, and one evening they sat before the fire together, but the stories were finished. *Carsus and Moderus*, and *Lunkentus*, and *The Beautiful Melusina* had all lived before her. Like the flames, they had flashed through a brilliant life, but now the heroes were all slain and the beautiful princess had turned to ashes, till the next blaze in the fireplace should waken them to life again. But the child's hand still rested on her grandmother's dress, and she softly stroked the silk — that funny silk which squeaked like a little bird when you touched it. And that movement was her prayer, for she was one of those children who never pray in words.

"Then the old lady began to tell her gently of a little child who was born in the land of Judea — a little child who was born to be a great king. The angels had filled the world with songs of praise when he had been born. The kings of the East had sought him, guided by the star of heaven, and had presented him with gold and incense, and old men and women prophesied his glory. And the child grew to greater wisdom and beauty than other children. When only twelve years old, his wisdom was greater than that of the high priest and the scribes.

"And the old lady told her of the most beautiful thing the world had ever seen—of the life of that child while he remained on the earth among the wicked people who would not acknowledge him as their king. She told her how the child became a man, while wonderful miracles ever surrounded him.

"All on earth served and loved him, all but men. The fish allowed themselves to be caught in his net, bread filled his baskets, water turned to wine when he wished it. But men gave him no golden crown, no glittering throne. There were no courtiers to bow before him. They allowed him to go away and live as a beggar.

"Yet he was so good to them—he healed their sick, gave sight to the blind, and raised the dead.

"'But,' said the old lady, 'men would not receive him as their lord. They sent their soldiers against him and took him prisoner. They mocked him, dressing him in a silken mantle and a crown and sceptre, and made him bear his heavy cross to the place of execution.

"'Oh, my child! the good king loved the hills. At night he used to ascend thither and hold converse with the dwellers of the heavens, and he liked to sit on the side of a mountain in the daytime and talk to the listening multitude. But now they led him up the mountain to crucify him. They drove nails through his hands and feet, and hung the good

king upon a cross as if he had been a robber and a murderer.

"'And the people mocked him. Only his mother and his friends wept that he should die before he became king.

"'Oh, how the dead world sorrowed at his death!

"'The sun lost its light, and the mountains shook; the veil of the temple was rent, and the graves opened to allow the dead to rise and show their sorrow.'

"The child lay with her head on the grandmother's knee, and sobbed as if her heart would break.

"'Don't cry, dear; the good king rose again and went to his father in heaven.'

"'Grandmother,' she sobbed, 'did he never receive his kingdom here?'

"'He sits at the right hand of God.'

"But that did not comfort her. She wept as hopelessly and as unrestrainedly as only a child can weep.

"'Why were they so cruel to him? Why were they allowed to be so cruel to him?'

"The old lady was almost frightened at such overwhelming sorrow.

"'Say, grandmother, that you did not tell the story rightly! Say that it ended differently, that they were not so cruel to the good king, and that he received his kingdom here on earth!'

"She flung her arms around her grandmother, tears still streaming from her eyes.

"'Child, child,' her grandmother said to comfort her, 'there are people who believe he will return. The world will then be in his power, and he will rule it. It will be a beautiful kingdom and last for a thousand years. And the evil beasts shall become good, and the children shall play in the adder's nest, and the bear and the ox shall feed together. Nothing will harm or destroy, the spears shall be turned into scythes, and swords shall be forged into ploughshares. And all shall be joy and gladness, for the good shall inherit the earth.'

"Then the child's face brightened beneath her tears.

"'Will the good king have a throne, grandmother?'

"'A throne of gold.'

"'And servants and courtiers and a golden crown?'

"'Yes.'

"'Will he come soon, grandmother?'

"'No one knows when he will come.'

"'May I then sit on a cushion at his feet?'

"'Yes, certainly you may.'

"'Grandmother, I am so happy,' she cried.

"Evening after evening, for many winters, those two sat by the fire and talked about the good king and his kingdom. The child dreamed of it both day and night, and she never wearied of aggrandizing it in fancy with all the beautiful she could imagine.

"It is often the case with the silent children about us that they cherish a dream which they dare not talk about. There are wonderful thoughts inside many a head of soft hair; the brown eyes see many wonderful visions behind their drooping eyelids; many a fair maid has her bridegroom in heaven; many a rosy cheek would anoint the feet of the good king with precious ointment, and dry them with her hair.

"Ebba Dohna dared not tell any one about it, but since that evening she had lived for the Lord's Millennium alone, and to await his coming.

"When the evening sun lighted up the portals of the west, she wondered if he would not appear there, shining in quiet splendor, followed by millions of angels, and pass by her, allowing her to touch the hem of his mantle.

"She often thought, too, of the pious women who had loved him as devotedly as she did, and hung veils over their heads, and never raised their eyes from earth, but imprisoned themselves in the quiet of grey cloisters and the darkness of small cells so as to see uninterruptedly the glorious visions that rise from the darkness of the soul.

"Thus she had grown up, and such was her character, when she and the new tutor began to meet in the lonely park. I will speak no more ill of him than I must. I try to believe that he loved that child who chose him as her companion in her lonely walks.

I believe his soul again took wing as he walked by the side of that silent girl, who had never confided in any one before. I think he felt himself like a child again too, good and virtuous.

"But if he loved her, why did he not remember that he could give her no worse gift than his love? He, one of the outcasts of the world, what was he doing, what was he thinking of, as he walked by the side of the Count's daughter? What did he, the discharged pastor, feel when she confided her religious dreams to him? What was he, who had been a drunkard and brawler, and would be one again as soon as the opportunity offered—what was he doing by the side of her who dreamed of a bridegroom in heaven? Why did he not flee, flee far from her? Would it not have been better for him to wander stealing and begging through the country than that he should walk there in the silent pine wood and be good and virtuous and devout again, when his past life could not be lived over again, and it was unavoidable that Ebba Dohna should learn to love him?

"You are not to think he looked a miserable drunkard with ashy cheeks and red eyes. He was ever a stately man, beautiful and strong in body and soul. He bore himself like a king, and had an iron constitution which was not impaired by the wildest life."

"Is he still alive?" asked the Countess.

"Oh, no, he must be dead now. It is all so long ago."

There was something within Anna Stjärnhök that trembled at what she was doing. She began to think she would never tell the Countess who the man was, that she would let her believe him dead.

"At that time he was still young," she continued her story; "the joy of life awoke again within him. He had the gift of speech and a fiery, inflammable heart. There came an evening when he spoke to her of love. She did not answer him, but told him of what her grandmother had described to her in the winter evenings and of the land of her dreams. Afterwards she made him promise, made him swear, that he would be one of God's preachers, one of those who would prepare the way for him, that his coming might be hastened.

"What could he do? He was a discharged clergyman, and no path was so impossible for him as the one she had wished him to tread. But he dared not tell her the truth: he had not the heart to distress the sweet child he loved. He promised all she asked.

"Not many words between them were required after that. It was clear that she would one day be his wife. It was not a love of kisses and caresses. He hardly dared approach her closely; she was as sensitive as a fragile flower; but her brown eyes were raised from the ground sometimes in search of his. On moonlight nights, when they sat upon the ve-

randa, she used to creep close to him, and he kissed her hair without her noticing it.

"But, you understand, his sin lay in his forgetfulness of both past and future. That he was poor and had no position in life, he might easily forget; but he ought to have remembered that the day would surely come when love would rise against love in her mind, earth against heaven, and when she must choose between him and the glorious Lord of her dreams. And she was not one of those who could survive such a strife.

"So passed the summer, the autumn, and winter. When spring came, and the ice in the Löfven broke up, Ebba Dohna lay sick. The springs were melting in the valleys, the brooks were swelling, the ice on the lakes was insecure, roads were impassable both for sledges and wheeled vehicles. Countess Dohna wanted a doctor from Karlstad — there was no one nearer — but she commanded in vain. Neither threats nor prayers could induce any of the servants to go for him. She begged the coachman on her knees, but he refused. She had cramp and hysterics, she was so alarmed over her daughter. She was as uncontrolled in sorrow as in joy was Countess Märta.

"Ebba Dohna had inflammation of the lungs, and her life was in danger, but there was no doctor to be had.

"Then the tutor rode to Karlstad. To cross the

country when the roads were in such a state was to venture his life, but he did it. He crossed the lakes on swaying ice, and climbed neck-breaking heaps of it, where it was stacked; he was obliged sometimes to cut steps for his horse in the high blocks, sometimes he dragged it out of the deep mire of the road. They said the doctor refused to accompany him, but that he forced him to do so at the point of his pistol.

"When he came back, the Countess was ready to cast herself at his feet. 'Take everything,' she cried, 'take what you will—my daughter, my land, or my money!'

"'Your daughter,' said the tutor."

Anna Stjärnhök suddenly became silent.

"Well, and afterwards—and afterwards?" asked the Countess.

"That is enough," answered Anna, for she was one of those miserable people who are always in fear and doubt. She had been in doubt all the week. She did not know what she wanted. That which seemed right to her one moment seemed wrong the next. Now she wished she had never begun this story.

"I begin to believe you are mocking me, Anna. Don't you understand I *must* hear the end?"

"There isn't much more to say. The hour of strife had come to Ebba Dohna, love rose against love, earth against heaven. . . .

"Countess Märta told her daughter of the wonderful journey the young man had made for her sake, and that as a reward she had given him her hand.

"Ebba Dohna was so far convalescent that she lay dressed upon the sofa. She was tired and pale and even more silent than usual. When she heard these words, she lifted her reproachful, mournful brown eyes to her mother and said, 'Mamma, have you given me to a discharged clergyman, to one who has forfeited his right to be God's servant, to a man who has been a beggar and a thief?'

"'But, child, who has told you this? I thought you knew nothing about it!'

"'I heard it — I heard your visitors talking about it the day I fell ill.'

"'But remember, Ebba, he saved your life.'

"'I remember that he has deceived me. He should have told me who he was.'

"'He says you love him.'

"'I have done so. I cannot love him who has deceived me.'

"'In what way has he deceived you?'

"'You would not understand, mamma.'

"She did not care to talk to her mother about the Millennium of her dreams which her lover was to help her to realize.

"'Ebba,' said her mother, 'if you love him, you must not think of what he has been, but marry him.

The husband of Countess Dohna will be sufficiently rich and sufficiently powerful for his youthful sins to be forgiven him.'

"'I am not thinking of his youthful sins, mamma. It is because he has deceived me and can never be what I wished him to be that I will not marry him.'

"'Ebba, remember I have given my word.'

"The girl became deadly pale.

"'Mamma, I tell you, if you make me marry him, you part me from God.'

"'I am determined to make you happy,' said her mother, 'and I am sure you will be happy with this man. You have already made a saint of him. I have determined to put aside the usual requirements of our station, and to forget that he is poor and despised, to give you the opportunity of raising him. I feel I am doing what is right. You know how I despise all old conventionalities.'

"But she said this because she could not endure any one to contradict her. Perhaps, too, she meant it when she said it. Countess Märta was not easy to understand.

"Ebba lay quietly on her sofa for a long time after her mother left her. She fought her fight. Earth rose against heaven, love against love; but the love of her childhood won the battle. As she lay there on that very sofa, she saw the west flush into a glorious sunset. She felt it was a greeting from the good king, and as she was not strong enough to

be true to him if she lived, she determined to die. She could do nothing else when her mother wished her to be the wife of one who could not be a servant of the king. She went to the window, opened it, and let the cold, damp evening again envelop her poor, feeble little body.

"It was easy for her to bring about her death. It was certain she would have a relapse, and she did.

"No one but I knew that she had sought her death. I found her at the window. I heard her ravings in her fever. She liked me to remain by her side during her last days.

"It was I who saw her die, who saw her, one evening, stretch out her arms to the glowing west, and die, smiling, as if she had seen some one step out from the sunset radiance to meet her. I also was to carry her last greeting to the man she had loved. I was to ask him to forgive her that she could not be his wife. The good king would not allow it.

"But I have not dared to tell the man he was her murderer. I have not dared to lay the burden of such sorrow upon him. And yet, he that lied and won her love was he not her murderer? Was he not, Elizabeth?"

Countess Dohna had long since ceased caressing the blue anemones. Now she stood up, and the bouquet fell to the ground.

"Anna, you are still mocking me. You say the

story is old, and that the man is dead long ago. But I know it is hardly five years since Ebba Dohna died, and you say you were a witness to it all. You are not old. Tell me who the man is."

Anna Stjärnhök began to laugh.

"You wanted a love story, and you have had one which has cost you both tears and distress."

"Do you mean that it is not true?"

"It is nothing but lies and fancy, my dear."

"You are malicious, Anna."

"Perhaps—I am not too happy. I can tell you—but the old ladies have wakened, and the gentlemen are entering the drawing-room—let us join them."

She was arrested on the threshold by Gösta Berling, who had come in search of the young ladies.

"You must have patience with me," he said, laughingly; "I am only going to annoy you for ten minutes, but you must hear some poetry."

He told them that he had dreamed that night more vividly than usual—dreamed that he wrote poetry. And he—the so-called "poet," though he had borne the name innocently hitherto—had got up in the middle of the night and, half asleep, half awake, had begun to write. And he had found quite a long poem on his writing-table in the morning. He never could have believed it of himself. The ladies must hear it, and he read:

"*Now rose the moon, and with it came the day's most lovely hour,*
And from the clear, pale, lofty dome, she poured her shimmer down
On the veranda wreathed in lovely flowers;
While at our feet the lily spread
Its scent, its chalice tipped with gold;
And on the hard, broad stairway there
We grouped together, young and old,
Silent at first, and let our feelings sing
Our hearts' old songs in that most lovely hour.

"*From the mignonette bed a lovely scent was all around diffused,*
And from the dark and gloomy tangle of the undergrowth
The shadows crept over the dewy plot.
Our spirits, freed, now flew on high
To regions which they scarce could reach,
To the pale blue shining dome on high,
Whose brightness scarce revealed a star.
Ah! who could flee a throbbing of the heart
When shadows sport and mignonette perfumes the air.

"*A Provence rose shed silently its last, pale, fading leaves,*
And yet no sportive breeze had claimed the sacrifice.
So, thought we, would we give our life,
Vanish in air like a dying tone,
Like autumn's yellow leaves, without a sigh.
Oh! ye strain at the length of our years, disturb
Thus Nature's peace — to grasp a vision.
Death is Life's wage, so may we pass in peace
As a Provence rose sheds silently its last pale leaves.

"On quivering wing a lonely bat flew swift and noiseless by.
Passed and repassed, and was ever seen where'er the moonlight fell;
And in the downcast hearts it raised
The question never answered yet—
Deep as sorrow—old as pain—
'Oh, whither go ye, what paths shall ye tread
When the verdant paths of the earth ye leave?
Can ye point the spirit's path to another?'—No,
'T were easier to guide the bat which fluttereth by just now.

"On my shoulder, then, my darling leaned her head, her soft, sweet hair,
And softly she did whisper to him whom she thus loved—
'Ne'er dream my soul will flee from thee
To distant spheres when I am dead;
My homeless spirit will find its way
To thee, oh, love! and dwell in thee.'
What pain! My heart was nigh to break.
Would she then die? Was this night then her last?
Was this my parting kiss upon my darling's face?

"Now many years have passed since then—I sit again and oft
In that old favorite place of mine, when nights are dark and still;
But I shrink from the moon—she knows how oft
On the veranda I have kissed my love.
Her shimmering light she used to blend
With the tears I shed on my darling's hair.
Oh, the woe of memory! It is my curse.
My soul is the home of hers! What doom can he await
Who has bound to his a soul so pure and fair!"

"Gösta," said Anna, in a would-be laughing tone, though fear clutched at her throat, "they say that you have lived through more poems than have ever been written by those who do nothing else all their lives; but I advise you to keep to your own style of poem. Those verses are clearly a night production."

"You are cutting, Anna."

"To come and read to us about death and misery! Aren't you ashamed?"

But Gösta was not paying further attention to her, his eyes were fixed on the young Countess. She sat quite motionless, immovable as a statue. He thought she was going to faint.

But with much trouble a word passed her lips.

"Go!" she said.

"Who is to go? Is it I?"

"The parson must go," she ejaculated.

"Elizabeth, do be silent!"

"The drunken parson must leave my house!"

"Anna, Anna," cried Gösta, "what does she mean?"

"Go away, Gösta; it is best you should go."

"Why should I go? What is the meaning of this?"

"Anna," said the Countess, "tell him—tell him . . . "

"No, Countess, you must tell him yourself."

The Countess Elizabeth bit her teeth together and mastered her feeling.

"Herr Berling," she said, approaching him, "you have a wonderful faculty for making people forget who you are. I have not heard till to-day. I have just been told the story of Ebba Dohna's death, and that it was the knowledge that the man she loved was unworthy of her love which caused her death. Your poem has shown me that you are the man. I cannot understand how a man with a past such as yours dares to show himself in the society of a decent woman. I cannot understand it, Herr Berling. Is my meaning sufficiently clear?"

"It is, Countess. I will only say one word in defence. I was convinced—I have been convinced all the time that you knew all about me. I have never tried to hide anything, but there is no pleasure in shouting out one's bitterest griefs from the housetops—least of all to do it one's self."

And he left them.

At the same moment Countess Dohna set her foot upon the little bouquet of blue anemones.

"You have done what I desired," said Anna Stjärnhök to her in a hard voice; "but this is the end of our friendship. You need not think I will forgive you for having been cruel to him. You have dismissed him, scorned and hurt him, and I—I would follow him to prison, to the pillory if need be. I will guard and defend him. You have done what I desired, but I shall never forgive you."

"But, Anna, Anna!"

"If I told you that story, do you think I did it with a glad heart? Have I not been tearing my heart out bit by bit while sitting here?"

"Then, why did you do it?"

"Why? Because—because I did not wish him to be the lover of a married woman. . . ."

Mamselle Marie

O HARK, hark! There is a buzzing over my head. It must be a bumblebee that comes flying. And what a fragrance! As true as I live, it is boy's-love and sweet lavender and hawthorne and lilac and white narcissus. How delightful to have all this steal in upon you on a grey autumn evening in the midst of the town. I have only to think of that precious little corner of the earth, and immediately I hear the hum of tiny wings and the air about me is filled with sweet perfumes. In a twinkling I am transported into a little square rose-garden, full of flowers, protected by a privet-hedge. In the corners are lilac bowers with wooden seats, and between the flower beds, which are formed in the shape of hearts and stars, wind narrow paths, strewn with white sea-sand. On three sides of this rose-garden are woods. Semi-wild rowan and hagberry trees stand nearest it, their scents blending with the perfume of the lilacs. Beyond are some clusters of silver-stemmed birches, which lead to the spruce forest—the real forest, dark and silent; bearded and prickly. And on the fourth side stands a little grey cottage.

The rose-garden of which I am thinking was owned some sixty years ago by an old Fru Moreus of Svartsjö, who earned her living making quilts

for the peasants and cooking the food for their feasts.

Dear friends, of the many good things that I wish for you, above all I would name a rose-garden and a quilting-frame—a great, wobbly, old-fashioned quilting-frame, with worn screw-taps and chipped rollers, at which five or six persons can work at the same time and hold a stitching contest, where all hands vie with each other to produce neat stitches on the under-side; where one munches roasted apples, and chatters, and "journeys to Greenland to hide the ring," and laughs till the squirrels out in the wood tumble headlong to the ground from fright. A quilting-frame for winter and for summer a rose-garden. Not a garden on which one must lay out more money than the pleasure is worth, but a rose-garden such as they had in the old days, the kind you tend with your own hands; with little brier trees crowning the brow of the small hillocks and wreaths of forget-me-nots encircling the foot, and where the big floppy poppy, which sows itself, springs up everywhere on the grassy borders, and even in the sand-path; also there should be a sun-browned moss sofa, overgrown with columbine and crown imperials.

Old Fru Moreus, who had three lively and industrious daughters, was in her day the proud possessor of many things. She owned a little cottage near the roadside, had a nest-egg tucked away at the bot-

tom of an old chest, had stiff silk shawls and straight-backed armchairs, and besides, she had learned to do any number of things that are useful to know for one who must earn her own bread. But the quilting-frame, which brought her work the year round, and the rose-garden, which gave her joy the whole summer long, were to her the best of all.

In Fru Moreus's cottage was a lodger, a little weazened spinster about forty years of age, who occupied a gable-room in the attic. Mamselle Marie, as she was called, held views of her own about many things, as is apt to be the case with those who sit much alone and let their thoughts dwell on what their eyes have seen.

Now Mamselle Marie believed that love was the root of all the evil in this mundane world. Every night before going to sleep, she would fold her hands and say her evening prayers. When she had said "Our Father" and "Lord bless us," she always prayed God to preserve her from love.

"It could only end in misery," she would say, "for I am old and homely and poor. May I be spared from falling in love!"

Day after day she sat in her attic chamber, knitting curtains and table-covers in shell-stitch, which she sold to the gentry and the peasants. She was knitting together a little cottage of her own. A cot on the hillside opposite Svartsjö Church was what she wanted—a cottage on high ground from which

one could have a fine open view, that was her dream. But of love she would have none.

When on a summer evening she heard the sound of violin music from the crossroads, where the fiddler sat on a stile, and the young folks danced till the dust whirled about them, she would go a long way around through the wood to escape hearing and seeing.

The day after Christmas, when the peasant brides came to be dressed by Fru Moreus and her daughters, while they were being adorned with wreaths of myrtle and high satin crowns broidered with glass beads, with gorgeous silk sashes and breast bouquets of hand-made roses and skirts garlanded with taffeta flowers, she kept to her room so as not to see them decked out in Love's honor.

And when on winter evenings the Moreus girls sat at the quilting-frame in the cosy living-room, where a fire crackled on the hearth and the glass-apples swung and sweated before the blaze; when handsome Gösta Berling and the good Ferdinand, dropping in for a visit, would pull the thread out of the needles and fool the girls into making crooked stitches, the walls fairly ringing with the merry chatter and the love-making, as hands met hands under the quilting-frame—then, vexed, she would hurriedly gather up her knitting and quit the room. For she hated lovers and the ways of Love.

But Love's misdeeds she knew, and of these she

could tell! She wondered that Amor still dared show himself on this earth, that he was not frightened away by the wails of the forsaken, by the curses of those whom he had turned into criminals, by the lamentations of others whom he had cast into hateful bondage, and she marvelled that his wings could bear him so lightly, that he did not fall into the abyss of oblivion, weighed down by shame and remorse.

To be sure, she, like others, had once been young, but she had never been in love with Love. Never had she let herself be tempted to dance or to take or give a caress. Her mother's guitar hung in the attic, dusty and unstrung, but Mamselle Marie had never thrummed inane love-ditties on it. Her mother's potted rose-tree stood in the window; she watered it, that was all, for she was not fond of flowers, those children of love. Its leaves sagged with dust, spiders spun webs between the stems, and the buds never opened.

In Fru Moreus's rose-garden, where butterflies fluttered and birds sang, where fragrant blossoms wafted their love messages to circling bees — where everything spoke of the detestable Amor — she seldom set foot.

Then there came a time when the Svartsjö folk had an organ put into their church. A young organ-builder arrived in the parish, and he too became a lodger at Fru Moreus's cottage.

It was he who built in the organ which has such extraordinary tones, whose thundering bass sometimes bursts forth in the middle of a peaceful anthem—how or why, none can say—and sets all the children howling in church at Christmas matins.

That the young organ-builder was a master of his craft may well be doubted, but he was a bonny fellow with sunshine in his eyes. He had a pleasant word for every one,—for rich and poor, old and young.

When he came home from his work in the evening, he would hold Fru Moreus's skein, dig side by side with the young girls in the rose-garden, declaim *Axel* and sing *Frithiof*, and he picked up Mamselle Marie's ball of thread as often as she let it drop, and even set her clock going.

He never came away from a ball without having danced with every woman there, from the oldest matron to the youngest slip of a girl, and when some adversity befell him, he would sit down beside the first woman he chanced to meet and make her his confidant. He was the manner of man women create in their dreams. It cannot be said that he spoke to any one of love, but he had not been many weeks at Fru Moreus's before all the girls were in love with him. As for poor Mamselle Marie, she had prayed her prayers in vain.

That was a time of sorrow and a time of joy. Tears rained on the quilting-frame, blotting out the

chalk lines. Evenings, a pale dreamer often sat in the lilac bower, and up in Mamselle Marie's little room the newly strung guitar twanged to old love songs, which Marie had learned from her mother.

The young organ-builder meanwhile went about, happy and care-free, lavishing his smiles and attentions upon these languishing women, who quarrelled over him while he was away at his work. Then, at last, came the day when he must depart.

The conveyance was at the door, the luggage had been tied on behind, and the young man said farewell. He kissed Fru Moreus on the hand, gathered the weeping girls in his arms, and kissed them on the cheek. He wept himself at having to leave there, for he had passed a pleasant summer in the little grey cottage. At the very last he looked around for Mamselle Marie.

She came down the old attic stairs in her best array, the guitar strung round her neck on a broad, green silk ribbon, a bouquet of "moon-roses" in her hand; for that summer her mother's rose-tree had bloomed. She stood before the young man, struck her guitar, and sang:

"Thou 'rt going far from us. Ah, come back again!
'T is friendship's voice that entreats thee.
Be happy, forget not a true, loving heart,
Which in Värmeland's valleys awaits thee."

Whereupon she put the nosegay in his buttonhole

and kissed him square on the mouth; then she vanished up the attic stairs like an apparition.

Amor had taken revenge on her and made her a spectacle for all men. But she never again complained of him, never again put away the guitar, and never, never forgot to care for her mother's rose-tree.

"Better unhappiness with Love than happiness without him," she thought.

. . . .

Time passed. The Major's wife had been driven out of Ekeby, and the cavaliers had come into power. Thus it happened, as related, that Gösta Berling, one Sunday evening, read a poem to the Countess at Borg, after which he was ordered out of the house and told never to enter it again.

'T is said that when Gösta shut the hall door after him, he saw several sledges drive up to Borg, and cast a furtive glance at the little lady seated in the first sledge. Dark as that hour had been for him, it became darker still at sight of her. He hastened away, lest he be recognized. Forebodings of disaster filled his mind. Had the conversation inside called up this woman? One misfortune always brings another.

Servants came hurrying out, carriage aprons were unbuttoned, and pelts thrown to one side. Who had come? Who was the little lady that stood up in

the sledge? Ah, it was actually she herself, Märta Dohna, the celebrated Countess!

She was the gayest and maddest of women. A pleasure-loving world had placed her on a throne and crowned her its queen. Play and Laughter were her subjects, and in the lottery of life she had drawn music, dancing, and adventure.

Though now close on to fifty, she was one of the wise, who do not count the years. "He who cannot lift his foot to dance," she said, "nor open his mouth to laughter, he is old; he feels the atrocious burden of years, but not I."

King Pleasure did not reign undisturbed in the days of her youth, but change and uncertainty only increased the delight of his charming presence. His Majesty of the butterfly wings had tea one day in the rooms of the ladies-in-waiting at the palace in Stockholm, and danced the next in Paris. He visited Napoleon's camps, sailed the blue Mediterranean with Nelson's fleet, attended a congress in Vienna, and risked going to Brussels on the eve of a famous battle to attend a ball.

And where King Pleasure was, there too was Märta Dohna, his chosen queen. Dancing, playing, jesting, Countess Märta flitted the whole world round. What had she not seen, what lived! She had danced thrones down, played *écarté* for principalities, caused devastating wars with her banter. Merriment and folly had been her life, and would

be always. Her feet were not too old for dancing, nor her heart for love. When did she ever weary of masquerades and comedies, of droll tales and plaintive ballads?

When Pleasure betimes was homeless in the great world converted into a battlefield, she would take refuge for a longer or shorter period at the Count's old manor on the shores of Lake Löfven, as in the time of the Holy Alliance, when the princes and their courts had become too dull for her ladyship. It was during one of these visits that she had thought it well to make Gösta Berling her son's tutor. She always enjoyed her stay at Borg. Never had Pleasure a more ideal kingdom, with gay, beautiful women and adventure-loving men. There was no lack of feasts and balls, of boating-parties on moonlit lakes, nor sleighing-parties through dark forests, nor thrilling heart-experiences.

But after her daughter's death the Countess had ceased coming. She had not visited Borg in five years. Now she came to see how her daughter-in-law bore the life among the pines, the bears, and the snows. She deemed it her duty to find out whether the tiresome Henrik had quite bored her to death with his stupidities, and she meant to play the gentle angel of domesticity. Sunshine and happiness were packed in her forty leather portmanteaux, Mirth was her handmaiden, Play her companion, Banter her charioteer.

As she tripped up the steps, she was met with open arms. Her old rooms had been put in order. Her companion, her maid, her footman, her forty leather portmanteaux and her thirty hat-boxes, her dressing-rolls, her shawls, and her furs were by degrees brought into the house. There was bustle and excitement from cellar to attic, a slamming of doors and a running on the stairs. It was quite evident that Countess Märta had arrived!

. . . .

It was a beautiful spring evening, though only April, and the ice in the lake had not yet broken up. Mamselle Marie had opened her window and was sitting in her room, picking her guitar and singing. She was so absorbed in her music and her memories that she did not notice that a carriage had drawn up at the door of the cottage. In the carriage sat Countess Märta, who was highly amused at the sight of Mamselle Marie seated at the window, hugging her guitar and, with eyes turned heavenward, singing old, long-forgotten love-ditties.

Presently the Countess got out of her carriage and went into the cottage, where the girls sat as usual at the quilting-frame. She was never haughty: the winds of the Revolution had swept over her and blown fresh air into her lungs.

It was not her fault that she was a Countess, she used to say; but at all events she would live the

life that was most pleasing to her. She had just as good a time at peasant weddings as at court balls, and when there was no one else at hand, she entertained her maids. She brought joy wherever she appeared, with her pretty little face and her exuberant spirits.

The Countess ordered quilts of Fru Moreus and complimented her daughters; she looked about the rose-garden and told of her adventures on the journey, for she was always having adventures, and she finally climbed the attic stairs, which were dreadfully steep and narrow, and sought out Mamselle Marie in her gable-room. The Countess's dark eyes beamed on the lonely little woman, and her mellow voice caressed her ear.

She gave her an order for curtains, and declared she could not live at Borg without having knitted curtains at all her windows, and for every table she must have one of Mamselle's covers.

Taking up the guitar, she sang to her of love and happiness and told her stories, and the little Mamselle was quite carried away into the gay, festive world. And the Countess's laugh was so musical it set all the little half-frozen birds out in the rose-garden warbling, and her face, which was hardly pretty now, for her complexion had been ruined by cosmetics and there was a sensual expression about her mouth, looked so beautiful to Mamselle Marie, that she wondered how the little looking-glass

could let it vanish once it had been mirrored on its shining surface.

At parting, she kissed Mamselle and asked her to come to Borg. Poor Mamselle Marie's heart was as empty as the swallow's nest at Christmas. Though free, she sighed for chains like a slave freed in old age.

Again there came for her a time of joy and a time of sorrow; but it did not last long—only one short week.

Every day the Countess sent for her and entertained her with anecdotes of her suitors, and Mamselle Marie laughed as she had never laughed before. They became the best of friends, and the Countess soon knew all about the young organ-builder and about the parting.

At twilight she would have Mamselle sit in the window-seat in the little blue cabinet, hang the guitar-ribbon round her neck, and make her sing love songs. The Countess sat where she could see the old spinster's shrunken figure and ugly little head silhouetted against the red evening sky, and she likened the poor Mamselle to a languishing maid of the castle. Her songs were all of tender shepherds and cruel shepherdesses, and her voice was the thinnest voice imaginable; so one can easily understand that the Countess had her little laugh at the ludicrousness of it all.

There was a party at Borg, as was natural when

the Count's mother had come home. It was not a grand affair, only the parish folk being invited; but every one had a jolly time, as usual.

The dining-hall was on the lower floor, and after supper the guests did not go upstairs again, but ensconced themselves in the adjoining room, which was Countess Märta's living-room. The Countess picked up Mamselle Marie's guitar, and began to sing for the company.

She was a merry-maker, this Countess, and a clever mimic. Now she had taken it into her head to mimic Mamselle Marie. Turning her eyes heavenward she proceeded to sing in a thin, squeaky voice.

"No no, no no, Countess!" pleaded Mamselle Marie.

But Märta Dohna was having sport, and the guests could hardly help laughing, though no doubt they felt sorry for poor Mamselle Marie.

The Countess took from a pot-pourri jar a handful of dried rose-leaves and, with tragic gestures, went up to Mamselle Marie, and sang with mock emotion:

"Thou 'rt going far from us. Ah, come back again!
'Tis friendship's voice that entreats thee.
Be happy, forget not a true, loving heart,
Which in Värmeland's valleys awaits thee."

Then she strewed the rose-leaves over her head. Everybody laughed except Mamselle Marie, who went white with fury. She looked as though she could have torn out the Countess's eyes.

"You 're a bad woman, Märta Dohna," she said. "No honest woman should associate with you."

Countess Märta was angry too.

"Out with you, Mamselle!" she cried. "I have had enough of your silliness."

"I shall go," answered Mamselle Marie, "but first I must be paid for my covers and my curtains, which you 've put up here."

"The old rags!" exclaimed the Countess. "Do you want to be paid for such rubbish? Take them away! I never wish to see them again. Take them away with you at once!"

Whereupon the Countess tore down the curtains and threw them, with the table-covers, at Mamselle Marie.

The next day young Countess Elizabeth begged her mother-in-law to make her peace with poor Mamselle; but she would not, for she was weary of her.

The young Countess then bought of Mamselle Marie the whole set of curtains and put them up at all the windows in the upper story, and Mamselle felt herself fully redressed.

Countess Märta chaffed her daughter-in-law a

good deal about her fondness for knitted curtains. She could also mask her anger—keep it smouldering for years. A very clever person was this Countess Märta Dohna.

END OF VOLUME I


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